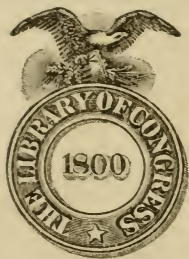


SOLUTION  
of the  
GREAT PROBLEM

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DELLOUE



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# SOLUTION OF THE GREAT PROBLEM

TRANSLATED BY E. LEAHY

FROM THE FRENCH OF

ABBÉ DELLOUE

*Military Chaplain at Soissons  
(Past Student of l'École Polytechnique)*

FROM SECOND REVISED FRENCH EDITION

"According as there is a future life or not,  
so must our course of action be shaped."

—PASCAL

Frederick Hustet Company

Printers to the Holy Apostolic See and Sacred Congregation of Rites

NEW YORK

CINCINNATI

1917

BT 1101  
.D4

**Hibit Obstat.**

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, D.D.

*Censor.*

**Imprimatur.**

✠ JOHN CARDINAL FARLEY,

*Archbishop of New York.*

NEW YORK, March 12, 1917.

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\$1.25

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BY FR. PUSTET COMPANY

NEW YORK AND CINCINNATI

JUL 17 1917

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2011

28. 37.  
Recat. Rev. 13, 30 Mr. 37.

## PREFACE

**T**RUTH is unchanging, but her aspects are endlessly varied, and the manifold minds and hearts of men apprehend her with various degrees and kinds of labor and imperfection. Every teacher of the great fundamental truths of life and eternity must adapt his message to his time and place, must speak the language of a particular auditory. Hence we ought to be prepared to welcome the appearance of a new Manual of Christian Apologetics, and not give way to the recurrent temptation to cry out against the making of new books and the passing over in their favor of old ones. Some of the old ones remain, no doubt, permanently useful; but they never suffice; there is always a real demand, a real place for the new.

There are a few (very few) books good for everybody: there will always be the real demand, the real place, for the special book for the special reader.

The Abbé Delloue in his *Solution du Grand Problème* has provided for his contemporaries and our own a volume which we think will make its home with very many minds and souls. He is a man of wide reading, well grounded in Catholic theology and philosophy and modern science; he is zealous for truth and its diffusion; he has the gift of common sense in an uncommon degree; he writes with eloquence and force. He devotes these gifts to a real and cogent exposition of the main facts concerning human life and destiny; he convinces us of the Catholic "whence" and "whither" and "why" and "how." It enters not into his plan or his scope to answer all difficulties; fools (notoriously) can ask more questions than wise men can answer, and (equally notoriously) the number of fools is infinite. The caviler may find in these pages room for caviling, as he has in the presence of greater teachers. But by the sincere soul, learned or unlearned, this book will, I believe, be valued as good, solid, and thoroughly helpful.

Whatever of specially French reference belongs to the Abbé Delloue's treatise has

## PREFACE

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been judiciously eliminated by the present translator. It is not the first time she has presented the English-reading public with a version in which the substance and even the aroma of a choice foreign work has been transfused into a new and thoroughly idiomatic vernacular form.

I trust her present work will contribute to a wide diffusion of religious philosophy.

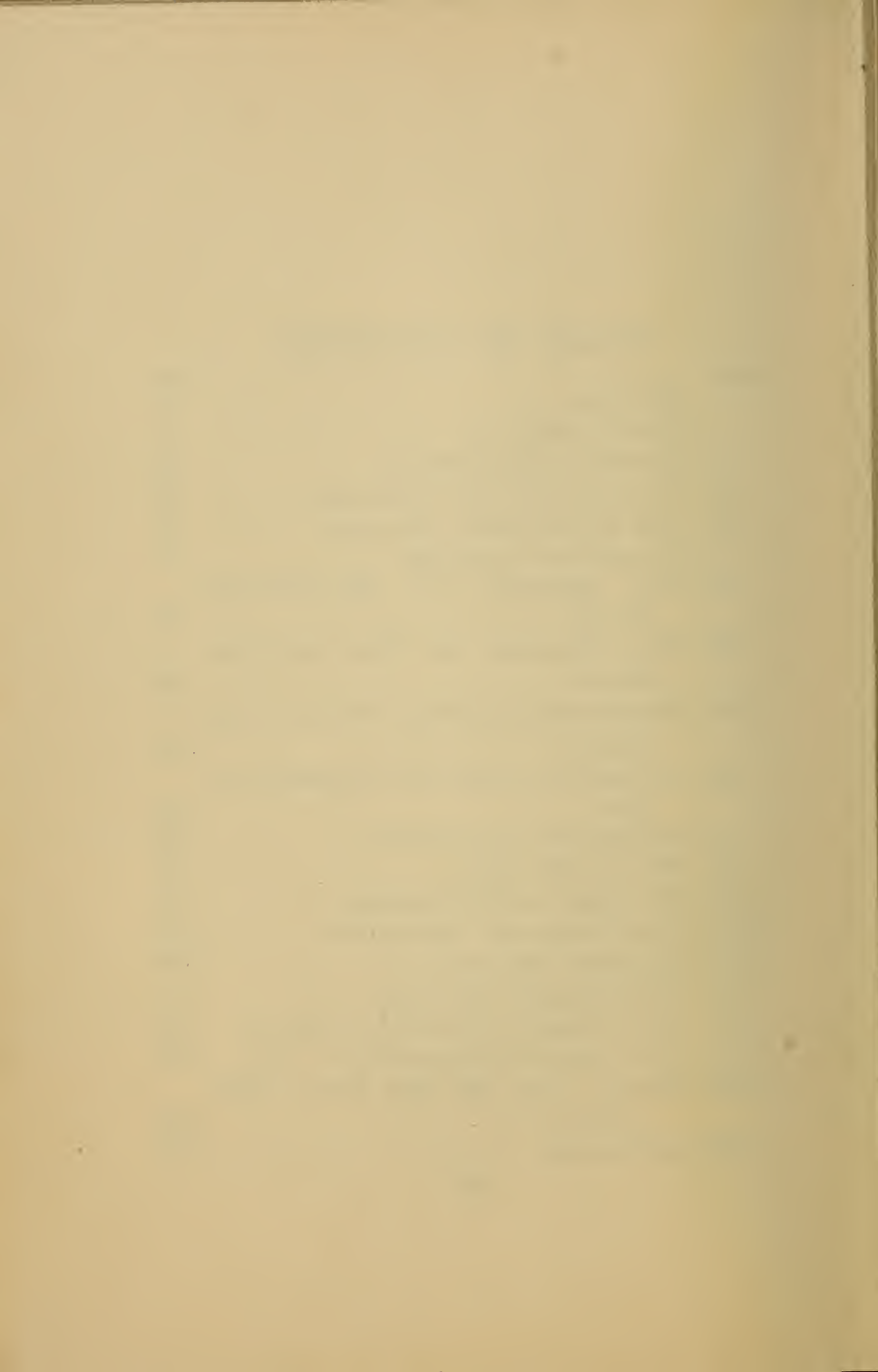
GEORGE O'NEILL, S. J.



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# SOLUTION OF THE GREAT PROBLEM

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

**S**CARCELY has the child entered into life when he is confronted with the problem of Death. With the gradual development of his awakening consciousness certain forms became familiar to him and he recognized them and grew to love them, to look for them as forming an essential part of his daily life: his mother, his nurse, his father, his brothers, his sisters who shared with him in every event, every incident of his life. And then, a day comes when one of those familiar figures is missing; it may be a beloved grandmother whom he has been accustomed to visit every day, and who ever welcomed him with tender caresses. He is told that she is ill, unable to see him; a few days pass, and one morning, his mother takes him in her arms, and weeping bitterly,

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tells him that dear "Grannie" is dead; he will never see her again. It may happen that it is this dearly-loved mother herself who is missing, she who was, as it were, the sun of his little world, part of his very life, or again it may be dear "Daddy," or it may be a young brother, a sister who suddenly drops out of his life and is seen no more, gone away, he knows not where. Perhaps he has been taken into a room and shown a white, silent form lying in a long wooden box from which he has shrunk in terror, refusing to believe that there was the loved one whose absence is so sadly felt, and which is causing him so much perplexity.

As the days pass, the child's reasoning powers grow stronger; he wants to know the why and the wherefore of all that is passing around him; he asks himself where have those dear ones, Grannie, mother, father, sister, brother gone. He questions his elders. If that child is in a Christian home, he is told that the loved one is in Heaven, with God. If, alas! those around him are of the number who for their greater misfortune have no belief in the immortality of the soul,

he receives the unsatisfactory answer, " he " or " she " as the case may be, " is no more " or perhaps, they may say, " he is asleep and will never awaken again."

But the child's inquisitive mind is not satisfied with these vague answers. He still asks himself: where are the dead gone? Was that motionless form with closed eyes whom they told him was his mother, was that all that was left of the one whom he loved so dearly?

A Christian child seeks light from his Catechism in which he learns that death is not complete annihilation; that the separation of the soul from the body is only temporary; whilst the lifeless body returns to dust, the soul, the immortal spirit, goes back to God who created it. He learns that this soul must submit to have judgment passed on all the actions of its rational life, after which, according to its merits, it enters into possession of never ending happiness, or is cast into eternal misery there to await the resurrection when the body shall be reunited to it, never again to die, to share with it its irrevocable fate.

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But there are many who have not had the good fortune to receive in early childhood this definite solution, or it may be that in the midst of life's multiplied daily preoccupations they have forgotten it. Hence when they reach maturity, the age for serious reflection, they are obliged to seek for it themselves. Even the believer who desires to give a reason for his belief, when face to face with the difficulties, the negations which confront him, is led to reflect upon the teachings of his faith, to ask himself: "Is what I have been taught really true? After my death will there indeed survive something of me which will continue to feel?"

It is certain that I shall die, every living thing is doomed to die. Look at that tree in the orchard, once it was full of life, of generous sap which, spreading through its branches caused it to produce each year a plentiful crop of fruit; gradually it withered, and now, some morning it will be cut down, sawn into pieces, and eventually these will be consumed in the fire, and nothing will remain of that tree but a little ashes. I, too, myself flourish but for a short time, only



soon to die. No matter how great my joy, my pride in living, it is in dust and ashes that I must end.

My dog, my faithful friend, the daily companion of my walks, one day lies down never to rise again; his eyes that once watched my every movement are closed; his ears are deaf to my call; his voice no longer gives expression to his delight at my presence. Let a grave be dug in which to bury him deep, he is but a corpse.

I too one day shall be a corpse. My eyes shall no longer behold the dazzling sun nor the thousand objects which it illumines; my ears shall be closed to all earthly sounds; I shall cease to eat, to drink, to speak, to laugh, to play; I must leave everything: all that I love, all that I am enamored of, parents, friends, beloved children. I must leave unfinished my literary or scientific labors. I must bid eternal farewell to all my possessions, lands, gardens, house, furniture, clothes, books, money, all the sweet enjoyments of life. Death is total, absolute separation. A short time ago I was present at the wedding of a young couple, both in

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the very flower of youth, handsome, radiant with happiness. Death, indeed, seemed far from this youthful pair who looked forward to long years of life unshadowed by care. Alas! for earthly hopes! On their honeymoon a motor car accident seemingly preventable occurred, and the bride of a few days was left to mourn over the loss of her husband snatched from her in a few moments by remorseless Death.

Death spares no one. The history of the world from the first days of its creation teaches us this truth. On the very threshold of the terrestrial Paradise Abel the just one dies, and beholding his lifeless body, his grief-stricken parents learn the meaning of that death to which they themselves have been condemned. In his turn Cain the fratricide dies. After long ages Adam and Eve are stricken by death. The Patriarchs, the years of whose life were long beyond those of all other men, they too, one day reached the terminus, death.

The rich, the wise, the virtuous, the saints, the most influential, the most powerful ones of earth, all have died. The greatest con-

querors the fame of whose deeds has filled the world, Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, they are dead. The most illustrious poets, the most brilliant geniuses, the most learned savants, the men, who by their discoveries have benefited the whole human race: the history of each of these, as of every child of Adam ends with these words: he died.

I shall die. When? Soon. The longest life is quickly spent; death allows no one to go for long scatheless. The man in the most perfect health is like some fruit beautiful to look at and seemingly sound, but at the heart of which is the canker of decay which very shortly will eat it away. Within myself I carry a thousand germs of death. Life has been defined as the combination of the forces which oppose death.<sup>1</sup> But in the struggle these forces are exhausted. With every heart-beat the vital strength of my system is being used up, impaired. Every breath I draw makes a breach in my life, is a step towards the grave.

No; Death will not tarry long, there is but a single step between us; an aneurism,

<sup>1</sup> Bichat.

an embolism, an attack of congestion, of cerebral hemorrhage: and for me all is over.

Death never considers age; youth in its very flower finds no favor in his sight, obtains no respite. Which of us who have come to maturity that does not remember having seen a young friend, a school-companion, a brother cut down in the very morning of life. A brother! The word recalls to me the saddest memories.

I had a brother, an only brother. He had reached his sixteenth year, and having finished his studies he had returned home. He was the light of my father's eyes, the joy and hope of his life; he was to succeed to the patrimonial estate, for I had chosen another career (I was a mining engineer). One day he went out shooting, and in trying to get through a hedge, his gun accidentally went off, the charge lodging in his leg. The wound seemed slight and caused no anxiety, but, eight days later there appeared symptoms of that terrible malady known as tetanus, at that time scarcely ever cured. In the midst of this frightful trouble I arrived from my travels in Austria. I watched the develop-



ment of the awful disease and was present during the fearful paroxysms with which for five days at intervals, growing shorter each time, my poor brother was seized; during these fearful attacks every muscle in his body stiffened, he seemed suffocating, unable to breathe, his heart seemed to cease beating, and for a moment, which seemed to those around an hour, life appeared to have fled. And then there came one last paroxysm more violent than all; when it ceased, my brother was a corpse. It was then that I realized to the full the uncertainty of life, the vanity of earthly hopes; from no book, no sermon could I have learned the lesson so well.

Not alone are we liable to die at all ages, but also, death may come at the moment when least expected. The time of death and its attendant circumstances are absolutely uncertain.

How shall I die and where? Shall I die in my bed or in the street, in a house or on a journey? Shall I die of an accident or of illness? Will my death be sudden or shall I have a long time in which to prepare myself? None of these questions can I answer.

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No matter how great my vigilance, it is certain that death will come upon me as a dreadful surprise. I shall be surprised, as the bird is taken by surprise and killed in the snare into which it falls unsuspectingly whilst picking up food; as the fish whilst swimming quietly in the river is taken by surprise in the fisherman's net. Death will come like a thief who takes every precaution to keep secret the hour at which he has planned to commit a robbery.

But of all this we have so much proof that it is puerile to urge it. Sudden deaths are so frequent that they no longer astonish us. Death then will one day remove me from this world, without even giving me notice as is done to a tenant who has no lease. And then of what avail to me to have lived? I shall have spent my life in nourishing and strengthening my body, in perfecting the faculties of my mind; to this work I shall have given the best part of my time, the best years of my life, and after all I must die, must see the work built up with so much labor fall to pieces. All that ardor, that enthusiasm which I had in life will dash

itself against a tombstone. The continued progress of my existence will end in a grave wherein my body will rot in oblivion.

This poor body of mine, death will strike it down, will render it lifeless, incapable of movement, will freeze it and deliver it, defenseless, to the thousand germs of decomposition which lie in ambush in my system. Immediately these microbes begin their work. After fermentation will come putrefaction, after putrefaction decomposition. Finally there will remain nothing of my body but some earthy matter which will disappear, absorbed into the elements of the soil. And now, in the presence of this handful of clay, all that will one day remain of me, I feel myself irresistibly driven to ask myself: "Is this indeed all that remains of man? Is death for me the end of everything, as it is for my horse, my dog? All human existence, is indeed confined within those limits which reach from the cradle to the tomb? Is there nothing beyond? Is there nothing of me which survives?" Such is the question which every man born into this world puts to himself, especially when the passing of years

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has brought maturity, and he begins to understand the vanity of earthly things, the nothingness of life, when he begins to listen to the rapid step of that terrible reaper who is hastening to cut the thread of his life.

Death, will it be the total destruction of my whole being, or is it a journey to another world, a migration of the best part of myself? In this latter event what shall I find beyond the tomb? In what situation shall that part of me which retains consciousness find itself? Shall I see my relatives gathered round my coffin, weeping over my poor remains? From the confines of the tomb shall I hear my panegyric spoken at my funeral obsequies? Shall I assist in some fashion at the distribution of my property? What poignant questions these!

Is it true, as Christians claim, that life has been given to us only that we may merit God; that Death is the way to meet Him, and that Eternity is ours in which to possess Him? Such is the problem which we have to resolve.

No one, I think, will dispute its supreme importance.



## CHAPTER II

### PRACTICAL INDIFFERENCE

**F**OR every man the question of our lot after death is the essential question.

It is the question which before all, above all and unceasingly, should engross our thoughts.

Now, marvelous to relate, such is by no means the case. By the majority of men this question seems to be ignored. They live as if they were never to die. Many, especially amongst the poor and the laboring class, live from day to day, thinking only of how to get their daily bread; when they happen to have a little money, they spend it at once in drink and amusement. They lead commonplace lives, without ever looking beyond the actual moment, without a thought of to-morrow, without ever reflecting what is to be the end of their lives. Poor sailors

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cast adrift on the sea of life, unable to direct their bark: perfectly useless to question these concerning the aim of life; they have none other than the immediate gratification of their natural impulses.

Let us turn to those who are given somewhat to reflection, who in working have some object in view, and let us see what it is they live for. These may be divided into three classes.

To begin with, there are many who think that they are in this world for no other purpose than to grow rich, to make money, to heap up gold, to buy houses, property, to enlarge their estates, to make their land produce good crops, to invest their money at the highest rate of interest; this is their whole aim in life. To succeed, they spare neither time nor trouble; they become hard to themselves; they work unceasingly even on Sundays and festivals, wearing out their health and strength; they grow harsh and unkind to their neighbors, and do not scruple to disregard justice by appropriating the property of others. They build for themselves palatial residences, and lay out beau-

tiful gardens and pleasure grounds, as if they were to enjoy these for ever.

There is another and very numerous class, consisting more especially of young people, who think that they have been sent into the world solely to amuse themselves, to avoid everything disagreeable, to shirk trouble of every kind, or fatiguing work, to have as good a time as possible, to do nothing but enjoy themselves, to spend their time in a ceaseless round of gayety, pleasure; such is their aim in life.

“The time of our life is short and tedious, and in the end of a man there is no remedy.

“Come therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth.

“Let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and ointments: and let not the flower of the time pass by us.

“Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered: let no meadow escape our riot.

“Let none of us go without his part in luxury: let us everywhere leave tokens of joy: for this is our portion, and this *our* lot.”

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Such are the maxims which the inspired writer <sup>1</sup> places on the lips of these people as they have existed in all ages.

Thus spoke Sardanapalus in Nineveh, Epicurus in Greece, Lucullus in Rome. Saint Paul was well acquainted with these pleasure-seekers, these gourmands whose god was in their stomach.

\* \* \* \* \*

And the race has not died out; we have but to look round us and we shall find men who look upon life as a long banquet which they must not leave until they have been surfeited, *ut conviva satur*. What numbers there are who never dream of inconveniencing themselves in order to fulfill a duty; who never dream of resisting the allurements of pleasure, and who have no scruple in stifling their conscience, and yielding to sensuality as if they had nothing to fear in a future life.

There are others, usually highly dowered by nature, intelligent, energetic, the end and aim of whose life seems to be fame, honor, learning, and the esteem, the consideration which it gains. You will hear a youth full of

<sup>1</sup> Wisdom 2, 1-9.



life and energy say: "I do not want to lose my time at college. I am going to work to be first in my class, so as to get the prize at the end of the year or to win a scholarship. I intend to work very hard; I shall study law, and I mean to practice speaking and debating so as to become an orator. One day I expect to have a seat in Congress, and very likely I may be President one day, at least, I shall try." Another tells you that he intends one day to write a great book which will make his name known all over the world. Another intends to enter the army; he will become a world-famous general. In this way, the majority of mankind try to live as if there were no such thing as death. Supposing that an angelic messenger should come to assure them that they were to remain here on earth for ever, truly, I do not see that they would need to make much change in their lives; they could not labor harder to grow rich; they could not be more eager for earthly pleasure, or more ambitious for human glory and renown.

In the ordinary every day language of the world we find this mentality which regards

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the present life as the be-all and end-all of everything, plainly revealed. On New Year's day men wish each other good health, long life. Health, they say, is the best of all possessions; if we must die, well, at all events let us do our best to keep it off as long as possible. The rich, the people who make lots of money: they are acclaimed as happy, for money enables one to enjoy life.

The same spirit pervades the books most in demand. The novels of the present day mostly represent love as the supreme joy of existence. They set forth all the delights of this passion of love; they relate at great length the sorrows of those lovers who cannot marry; then when all obstacles are removed, the book ends with their marriage, or it often happens, they dispense altogether with the marriage ceremony as being unnecessary. There is nothing more to tell; the lovers have reached the seventh heaven. As if they were never to grow old; never to die!

And yet, the majority of men have no illusions about death, nor do they deny the problem which it presents. Only they try not to think of it, and to live as if they did not

think of it. But if we could see into their hearts, especially when some great sorrow has fallen on them, above all at that supreme moment when the question is about to be decided for them, we should find in these hearts less indifference and skepticism than they affected when full of life and in the midst of prosperity.

But it is none the less true that the mass of mankind scarcely ever think of a future life. Whence comes this thoughtlessness? Our daily cares and anxieties, the contagious effect of the general indifference around us, the distractions of business, the allurements of pleasure: all divert our thoughts from the end of life.

The fascination of things seen produces in the soul a kind of intoxication which causes us to forget the future. We see working-men besotted from drink who once they have a glass of whisky before them will forget their most sacred duties as husbands and fathers. Similarly in the intoxication of the present moment men forget that earthly happiness must come to an end, and they invest it with a fictitious permanency. They

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reckon on living a long time, on enjoying for a long time the good things of life, and that, notwithstanding old age and infirmity.

And then people so easily persuade themselves that they can satisfy their passions with impunity, and that once they are secure from the judgment of their fellow men, they have nothing more to fear. Thus it is that by dint of thinking only of material things and the enjoyment derived from them some men reach the point of desiring to be, and even of believing, that they are only animals. For these the problem of death and the future life does not exist.

Finally, by force of seeing the death and burial of others, whilst they themselves go on living, people end by becoming accustomed to death, and in persuading themselves that they will not die. We believe that other people will die, but it requires an effort to realize that death will one day come to ourselves. Of course, in their heart of hearts people thoroughly realize that they must die, but practically they live as though death had nothing to do with them; they cling to this world as if they were never to leave it.



To the education given in public schools we must also attribute this general mentality of society. The curriculum of State education excludes the problem of life after death. In the State school the child is trained as if this world were to be his abiding place for ever. Of his supreme end he learns nothing; he is educated for this world alone, as if indeed the grave were the end of everything.

Now in all countries State teaching is secularist; in some few it is essentially atheistic. But in every State school education is wholly secular. By means of the system pursued in these public schools the religious sense in the pupils, if not wholly destroyed, is nearly always deadened. Secularists everywhere regard religion as a detriment in education. In these State schools every subject is taught except the one precisely the knowledge of which is of most importance: Whether there is for man a future life, an eternity of bliss or of misery. The child is taught how to live comfortably, happily, healthily, how to attain to a fine position in the world, to win honors, riches, absolutely as if we were to

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live for ever on this earth; as if there were no other life beyond the grave to have a place in our thoughts.

Perhaps a familiar comparison may enable us to realize the folly of such methods.

A man leaving for a distant land where he was to direct the working of a great industry, before his departure confided his son to the care of a tutor. A few years later this man having made his fortune wrote to the tutor to send his son out to him. The teacher at once made all preparations for the boy's journey, supplying him with everything which could possibly contribute to his comfort, his amusement, his pleasure; he gave him the most detailed instructions as to his behavior, and finally placed him in a railway carriage. The train started, and for some time the youth took much delight in gazing at the rapidly passing landscape. Quite unexpectedly the guard made his appearance, and brusquely demanded the passengers' tickets. A ticket! The boy had not got one; his master had not given him a ticket; he had not even told *him where he was going*, the place where his father was

living; he had thought of everything but that.

In this teacher we have an image of State education which instructs the young how they are to make the journey of life, but does not trouble in the least about the terminus in which this journey must come to an end.

The result of this deficient education is general indifference as to the future destiny of mankind. The child is father to the man. Never having been trained to raise his eyes to heaven, he keeps them obstinately fixed upon the ground. The actual presence of earthly goods competes powerfully with the hope of future riches, and causes him to lose sight of these, if not completely, at least practically.

Hence it is that not being able to abolish death, men have conceived the idea of never allowing their thoughts to dwell upon it, just as the ostrich when pursued by the hunter, we are told, sticks its head into the sand, and no longer seeing the enemy approach, fancies that it cannot itself be seen.

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But, such a mode of acting, it is very evident, will not suffice. A problem is not resolved by shutting the book in which it is enunciated. We cannot abolish death by refusing to think of it.



## CHAPTER III

### THE NECESSITY OF A SOLUTION

A WEALTHY manufacturer was one day just beginning a game of cards at his club when a friend of his came to him, and in very excited tones told him that a fire had broken out at his factory, and had spread so rapidly that great fears were entertained that the entire concern would be destroyed.

Now, what would you think of that man if, on hearing that such a disaster had befallen him, he went on calmly playing his game, merely remarking, "Oh, really, is that so?" "A man," you say, "who would act in such a manner, must be mad."

But whilst you are gambling away this present life, there are men of irreproachable honor and veracity, men of stainless reputation telling you, in all seriousness, to beware, that after death, unless you take care, you may fall into an everlasting fire.

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To these solemn warnings will you reply: "Bah! you are not serious. Do you think I am going to trouble myself about such a story as that?"

You will not be quite so silly. When it is a question of eternity, one cannot be too cautious. I am told that in the next world there will be for me an eternity either of misery or of happiness. Even if the probability of this future life were but small, yet the thoughts of it being eternal would render it of infinite importance. Practical indifference, therefore, to our future fate does not solve the problem definitely. One day or other, perhaps very soon, we have got to know what we are in for with regard to this main point.

Now, there might be some excuse for it, if this indifference attained its immediate end; if it procured happiness for us in this world. For in reality it is happiness, tranquillity, peace of heart people hope to find by resolutely refusing to think of life after death. This happiness which they seek, do they find it in riches, honors, pleasure? Do they succeed in creating for themselves in this world a happy, peaceful existence? There is not much

difficulty in proving the contrary. To begin with, the possession of wealth brings with it a thousand cares; the rich man is anxious about his investments, about his property, he is afraid of losing them.

Every one knows the fable of the cobbler and the banker. And Croesus, the richest man in the world, history tells us was also the most unhappy. Experience proves that money does not give happiness, and those who love money end by becoming miserable slaves to it.

Is happiness to be found in worldly pleasures? They afford, I grant you, a moment of fleeting sensual delight. And after? Remorse, dissatisfaction with oneself, weariness of life, often leading to despair and to suicide: such are the fruits of earthly pleasures. How many suicides, young men, have left letters behind them in which they said that they "were tired of life." They had sought happiness in sensual pleasures. Earthly pleasures are as a delusive mirage; they promise intoxicating joys, and they leave behind bitterness and disappointment.

Nor is happiness to be found in earthly

fame, glory. Who ever reached so quickly the pinnacle of earthly greatness and grandeur as Napoleon? He was the dreaded master of nearly all Europe. Was he happy? No; for England resisted him; his overweening ambition was not yet satisfied; he would climb higher still, ever higher, and in the end by the very force of his determined will to exalt himself, the eagle broke his wings and ended his days a miserable captive, chained to a desolate rock in the middle of the Atlantic. Of what avail all his past glory? But is it not possible here on earth to find purer, clearer springs at which to slake our thirst for happiness such as, love, learning? Ah no! Ardently indeed does the human heart long for that pure love, for that devoted, disinterested friendship which supplies the want of earthly riches. Vain longing! The love we give to others is not always returned in equal measure. How often, too often, is our trusting love, our whole-hearted confidence repaid, if not with treachery, with ingratitude. And then a trifling want of attention, a fancied slight, an involuntary forgetfulness, a misunderstanding, a caprice:



how often do these suffice to break the ties which we imagined were ever-lasting?

But surely we possess in ourselves at least one faculty which it is possible to satisfy. Our intellect for instance, will not Truth satisfy it? Truth for the minds of men is a feast, says Malebranche, a feast so delicious that when once tasted, one never wearies of desiring it, of seeking it. Let us therefore, seek the truth; let us devote ourselves to the pursuit of knowledge: in it we shall find happiness.

But in the pursuit of knowledge we are hindered, embarrassed by the common necessities of material life. And then our feeble brain grows weary, and forces us to admit reluctantly that we cannot know everything. The truth is, we do not know all that there is to know about anything.

Our scientific investigations instead of revealing to us the mystery of which we would pluck the secret, but render it still more impenetrable; nor do they ever satisfy our ardent desire to know the why and the wherefore of all things. Did we succeed in gaining a knowledge of all the laws of nature;

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of all mathematical deductions; of all physical forces; of all the secrets of the atoms; were we familiar with every event recorded in history, still beyond this visible world there would remain innumerable mysteries into which our ambitious intellect would wish to penetrate. No matter what the triumphs of man's intellect, it is never satisfied; never quite happy. Of course practically speaking, this unsatisfied feeling, this restlessness is not common to all mankind. Everybody does not indulge in gloomy thoughts; does not yield to depression; everybody is not so overwhelmed by misfortunes, as to cry out "I am tired of life"; everybody is not convinced of the vanity of all earthly things. But, one thing is certain, and on this point all are agreed: that on earth there is no perfect happiness, and even supposing that we could attain to this ideal happiness, it would be poisoned for us by the knowledge that one day we should have to leave it behind; that we must die. The greater our earthly happiness, the more bitter is the thought of death which will deprive us of it all. We must die. Yes; you who are

now in the spring-time of life; who dream bright dreams of future success, future greatness; who plan for yourselves glorious careers; you will be, you say, a great lawyer, a famous writer, a brilliant professor, a world-renowned scientist; you will win distinction in whatever career you choose; you will write your name on the annals of fame. Yes; but remember, life here on earth will not last for ever; you must die one day; you will be laid in the cold grave; and by degrees all remembrance of you will fade from men's minds; oblivion will enshroud your life, all that you have done. And even if your name were to go down to future ages on the roll-call of fame; if statues were erected to your memory, of what avail to you these honors when you were no longer here to enjoy them, and of which in all probability you would know nothing. Why such infinite trouble and labor to catch a bubble which eludes our grasp?

We must die. One day I must leave everything that I possess here on earth. This thought alone embitters all my joys. Even if riches did not engender cares; if honors did not bring with them anxiety, and pleasures

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prove deceptive, still the mere thought that I must leave them all would prevent me from enjoying them in peace. It is the sword of Damocles, this death, ever suspended over my head which prevents me ever finding happiness in life.

Ah! without doubt, many men would be content with earthly joys, most imperfect as they are, if only they could last for ever. But death is there as an inevitable ending, rising in the midst of our visions of happiness like a sinister specter.

Hence it is that I must lay aside my indifference and resolve the problem of death. Can it be that what people say is true, that there is indeed a future life, a judgment to come, an everlasting Hell? I cannot resign myself to the thought of being eternally miserable. Of what avail to me the fleeting happiness of this world, if after death an eternity of suffering awaits me? I must know what I am to believe regarding this supreme point; doubt is insupportable.

Life passes so quickly. Upon the solution of the great problem depends the use which I shall make of it. If death is really the



end of everything, then let us enjoy life to the utmost; away with everything which might hinder us indulging our thirst for pleasure. My sole duty is to procure for myself the greatest possible amount of enjoyment in this life which is my all.

If, on the contrary, this life is but a preparation for another; if, indeed, there is another never-ending life unchanging in joy or suffering, then, my whole duty, my supreme interest is to secure for myself happiness in this everlasting life. The present life is fleeting; it has no longer any absolute value; its whole value is relative to the eternity for which it is a preparation. If the happiness of this life is to lead me to eternal unhappiness, then is such happiness accursed. If the sufferings of this life secure for me a happy eternity, then indeed are those sufferings blessed. At all costs, therefore, I must know where I shall find myself when I have passed through the gate of death. That is my one and only concern.

Voltaire once said to a lady who was a practical Christian, "Madame, if there is no Heaven, you will be nicely tricked." "Sir,"

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she answered, "if there is an everlasting Hell, you will find yourself a far greater dupe." In truth, if death is finality, if nothing remains after death, the lot of the virtuous will be no worse than that of the dissolute; the wretched sensual pleasures renounced by the former whilst on earth, if there is an eternity, will not console the latter for being damned.

Even were the existence of Hell very improbable, prudence would still require of us that we should insure ourselves against the risk of such an eventuality, just as people insure themselves against fire. Very justly would a man be censured for his imprudence who would not insure his house. And yet the risk of a house going on fire is as a thousand to one in the year, whilst the risk which we incur of dying during the year is ten times greater. Further: The greater the value of a property, the more care should be taken to insure it. The owner of a house worth a million of money would be looked on as mad, if he neglected to insure it. Now what we have to insure against the risk of death and the resulting consequences is our own actual person, lost forever, if there is another life

for which we have never prepared. If I had neglected to insure my house, and it were burned to the ground, I might be ruined, perhaps, but I should still possess all my moral and intellectual faculties, my hands, my physical strength. I should be able to work; I should not die of hunger. But if eternal ruin befall me, then my loss is irreparable.

The exact, logical, irrefutable conclusion to be drawn from all this is: that if I have the least common sense, the least love for myself, I *must* examine and resolve this question of my destiny. To neglect a question of such supreme importance would be to act in a manner wholly irrational. And as to-morrow, perhaps, even this very day, I may be overtaken by death, it must be resolved, now, at once.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MATERIALIST'S SOLUTION

**T**O deny the existence of a future life is an easy way of solving the problem.

It is the method adopted by the materialist. There is no other life for man, he says, but the one here on earth. Death is the end of everything; there is nothing beyond the grave. "Science has not been able to discover a single proof of any life after death," says Littré; "experience proves that man, like the whole world, is only matter. Given certain conditions, matter produces motion, heat, light. In other conditions it produces animal and vegetable life. In man this same matter produces thought and volition, and with the cessation of those vital conditions which gave them birth, these too cease to exist. And then the atoms which compose that which we are become blended with inor-



ganic nature, to pass on into other living things: plants, animals, other men. Thus nothing is lost; nothing is created. Not a single molecule of our substance will be destroyed, but the short-lived combination of molecules which formed the human body of which I was formed, that is forever destroyed."

Such is the solution offered to us by materialists of the problem with which we are concerned. Man's end is absolutely the same as that of the animals. Can we be satisfied with this solution? Does it satisfy our legitimate demands? That it does not, is easily proved.

In the first place together with the consciousness of living, I feel within myself a desire to live, a pressing necessity to live for ever.

"You must limit your desires," answers the materialist, "to the present life. Be satisfied with having for a few years contemplated the eternal laws of the world, and with having loved what is worthy of love. That will amply repay us for having lived."

Is this a satisfactory answer?

In the first place every man has not time



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to meditate on the eternal laws of the Universe, and next, this living being which is myself persists in wanting to live. "But," they continue, "your scattered molecules will continue to form other beings which will contribute to the grandeur and beauty of the universe. Thanks to your sacrifice, the generations which will rapidly spring up beneath the sun will be freed from pain. The glorious humanity which incessant progress will one day cause to blossom forth and which may perhaps end by discovering the means of doing away with death, that glorious humanity will be due to you; it is you who will have prepared it."

This argument, indeed, does not afford me the least consolation. What do I care what becomes of my molecules after death? What has that to do with me? My molecules are not *myself*. To tell me that I am to be sacrificed for the benefit of future generations arouses in me feelings of jealousy rather than of resigned satisfaction. Future generations have no greater right than I have to life and happiness. And after all, is it so certain that they will not have to suffer?

Sorrow has ever been the companion of man, and it is very probable that it will be always so. Let everyone do his best to escape it; everyone for himself.

And when death has stricken a beloved relative, it is poor consolation to me in my sorrow to hear from a materialist doctor that the decomposition of the remains of the mother so dear to me will result in beautiful flowers springing up on her grave.

"If that does not suffice, think how you will be held in remembrance, you will live in men's memory; your renown, the fame of your works, your virtues will be imperishable; this is true immortality. Why do you wish for any other?"

Because I scoff at that fame which I am not to be here to enjoy. When I cannot be at a window to see it pass, I care nothing for a grand funeral, a hearse with draperies fringed with silver, caparisoned horses, and followed by an enormous cortège. When I cannot be there to hear, what matters to me the funeral oration in which my virtues will be eulogized? And if I am no longer living, what good will the erection of a public statue

be to me? I care nothing for that immortality in which everything survives excepting myself. Once more, I want to live and in the face of this imperious need of my nature the halting answers of materialism seem to me but a deception or vulgar buffoonery.

Thus the materialist solution is obviously insufficient to satisfy the human heart. Further, such a solution has dangerous consequences for individuals and for society. If there is no future life, then there is no longer any reward for good actions to be hoped for after death, nor any punishment to be feared for evil-doing. And to restrain the depraved appetites and the seething passions of men, the sanctions of the present life are not sufficient.

If we have not to fear appearing before a supreme Judge on the threshold of another world, then it is merely a question of escaping the clutches of the law in the present one. Provided this can be done, fraud, violence, injustice, oppression of the poor will be unrestrained. On the other hand, the poor man, if he is strong enough, can rise against

his oppressor, ruin him, destroy him. It is a struggle for life in which woe to the weak! And it is logic.

By what right can a man be forbidden to seek the maximum of enjoyment in this life if there is no other? For in that case, to do so is at once his right and his supreme interest. If, in the words of that now famous saying, you put out the stars of Heaven, if you take away from unhappy mortals the bright hopes of a better world beyond the grave, what remains to them save to try to get as much enjoyment as possible out of this life, the only one left to them? And then, no more resignation in misfortune, sickness, poverty. Looking at this matter from another point of view, what incentive would there be to noble deeds, to heroism? Disinterestedness, self-denial, devotedness, these would be but imbecilities, foolish renunciation of a happiness which we could not hope to regain. If there is no future life, then this present one becomes for us the supreme good to which everything else must be subordinate. Science and Art would henceforth have no other end than to prolong as far



as possible the duration of this combination of molecules which constitutes life and which endures for such a brief space of time. And if misfortune pursues me relentlessly, if on my earthly horizon there appears no dawn of happiness, I shall act wisely in taking my own life. Of all my rights suicide becomes the chief. If I have no longer anything left to hope for in life, then patience and resignation are meaningless. Misfortune pursues me. Well, through the door of suicide I escape. All quite right and reasonable!

Moreover, if I am composed only of a substance blind, inert, and affected by every determination given to it, how can I be a free agent? I think that I am, but this is a delusion, in reality I am not. The conviction that I am free, uncontrolled results from my ignorance of the forces which act unknown to me upon my brain. I have no free will, therefore I am not a responsible being. Hence, there are no moral obligations, no duties. We are not obliged to observe justice in our dealings with our fellowmen, to be charitable; to have compassion on human misery. Nothing remains but cruel



selfishness; my only obligation is to preserve at any cost, my own life, my own well-being.

Such are the dire results of the materialists' inhuman creed which runs counter to the noblest principles of humanity. Well has it been said: "Take away the belief in a future life, and with it you take away everything in the moral life of man and of society. Man becomes an animal, will end like one, and consequently lives like one."

Thus, the materialist solution is in direct opposition to the moral principles which govern individuals and communities. Further, it is in contradiction to the most manifest dictates of our understanding. Materialism without any proof assumes the identity or, at least, the homogeneity of all the phenomena with which we are acquainted from physico-chemical matters to the most sublime of religious and philosophical contemplation. To the materialist there is no essential difference between the manifestations withal, so different, of vegetable, sensitive, and intellectual life. The brain secretes thought as the stomach secretes the gastric juice.

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Now on the contrary, the most eminent scientists acknowledge that science is confronted with six problems which materialism is powerless to solve. These are:

The nature of matter and of force.

The origin of motion.

The evidence of purpose in every part of Nature.

The origin of sensation and of consciousness.

The origin of reason and of language.

For example, how can we explain by matter alone the consciousness of our personality which from the beginning to the end of life remains the same?

It has been scientifically proved that: Owing to the continual process of destruction going on in my system the molecules of my brain pass away one after the other and are replaced by new cells; in a few years, a few months, perhaps, all these molecules are replaced by new ones, and yet I have the clearest consciousness of remaining always the same person.

Again, how explain, by matter only, the conventional signs of language?

A sound, according to the language in which it is employed, although practically the same produces different effects. For instance, the sound written *sœur* or *sir*, according as it is used in French or English, suggests to me the idea of a daughter of the same parents, or a title of respect or nobility. Similarly, *chou*, *shoe*, identically the same, is a vegetable in French, in English a shoe. On the other hand, two words of totally different pronunciation such as *bon jour*, *Good-morning*, convey exactly the same meaning. If we were composed solely of matter, the same sound would produce the same cerebral disturbance, the same thought; different sounds would always suggest different ideas.

It is the same with visual images, written words. *Merci* is *thanks* in French, in Italian it signifies *merchandise*. Language assumes a variable convention of meaning of which matter, limited to our form, is incapable.

Under a scientific pretext materialism would fain establish the most unscientific theory possible. For science, true science consists in explaining phenomena by adequate causes, and in foreseeing the effects which

these causes will produce, in deducing the conclusion from the beginning.

By not explaining, or rather by rendering explanation impossible of the most certain acts of our inward perception such as consciousness, free-will, language, materialism, becomes unworthy to be called science, it merits only contempt. Assuredly, we shall not ask from it a solution of the great problem of our future existence.

Practical indifference regarding this question is an evil already too widely spread, as we have seen, and this fatal forgetfulness is the source of infinite confusion. What then would be the result if materialism, falsely calling itself science, had its claims allowed? Soon, in the place of civilized communities there would remain but a herd who would devour one another. History shows us that the decline of Greece and later that of Rome coincided with the decline of spiritualistic beliefs. This unfortunately, can be said of other nations also.



## CHAPTER V

### PANTHEISM—SKEPTICISM

**T**O deep thinkers gross materialism is repugnant. Forced by the undeniable testimony of our own consciousness to acknowledge that man thinks, we must admit that we have within us a certain spiritual element. But some philosophers deny to this element a substantial existence, and make of the human soul an emanation, a particular form of the divine universal substance, just as the extension of matter is another. This is Pantheism.

According to the Neo-stoics nothing exists outside God. Human beings without ceasing to exist in Him are distinguished from Him by a necessary emanation, and finally return into Him. According to Spinoza there is but one substance, the divine substance, the attributes of which are thought and extension. The different beings, the human soul amongst others, are only accidental



forms of this sole substance. Immanence, idealism in its various forms, monism, phenomenalism, are in reality only different phases of Pantheism. It is the same with M. Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, according to which there are no realities, only changes and actions. "The world is perpetually passing from one state to another," he says. "What we call things are only the aspects of this continual transition presented to our minds, the solidifications worked by our understanding. But in reality there are no substances."

These innumerable systems born of the fertile genius of thinkers, are all in agreement on one point: the negation of man's distinct personality, and consequently of free-will, of responsibility, and of conscious survival after our death. Hence it follows that they all have the fatal moral and social results of materialism, namely, no longer any sufficient sanction for the moral law, no incentive to good, no restraint on our unruly passions, no consolation in misfortune, no hope of one day being reunited to those dear ones torn from us by death.

But Pantheism, even still more than materialism, is contrary to common sense.

The word *common sense* expresses a law of our intellect, a law which remains ever the same. It is the natural inclination of our mind to admit certain truths without even a rational demonstration, because these truths are necessary to our sensitive, moral, and intellectual life. Common sense grasps the truth and gives assurance of its certainty. Every truth that accords with common sense is regarded by all mankind as proved beyond all possibility of doubt.

The popularity and continuance of a system in which a truth consistent with common sense is denied will be but of brief duration, however cleverly such a denial may be contrived.

Now in the first place, that actions proceed from beings subsistent in themselves is a truth which accords with common-sense. Of instinctive necessity we are obliged to regard all that we see accomplished as the work of actual and subsequent agents. The existence of the thing is quite as evident as the reality of the transient phenomenon.

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In what concerns each one of us, we can say: "I did such a thing," therefore, without any fear of self-deception we can conclude: "I am a subsistent being." This is an intellectual intuition which cannot deceive me, which gives me absolute certainty. It is in vain for Pantheism to say: "Yes, there is a substance, but there is only one. The Universe is God and it is everything. What you call your consciousness is only a manifestation or phenomenon of this sole substance." I shall remain irresistibly convinced of my own personality because it is immediately and absolutely evident to me.

Further, simultaneously with the consciousness of our personality, we have the incontrovertible certainty of the existence of exterior beings distinct from ourselves. Thus, the sun which warms us is not the water which evaporates; the man who speaks is not the man who listens to him. I am very keenly conscious that I am a subject quite distinct from other men. I who write these lines am quite distinct from you who read them. And yet they would fain insist that you and I are but *one* substance. Could there be any-

thing more contrary to common sense? Pantheism is, in truth, the logical denial of common sense and of the first principles of all rational life.

This sole substance, this God-Universe would be, at once, infinite yet finite, immutable yet changeable, inevitable yet accidental, definite and indefinite, perfect yet imperfect, both good and evil, truth and error, at one and the same time. Is there not a contradiction in these terms? Hence a pantheistic logician, Hegel, pursuing this unnatural logic to its extreme limit, begins with the principle that God and the world are identical, and ends necessarily in admitting the identity of contradictions. "To be and not to be," he said, are identical. Such a system is self-doomed before the bar of human common sense and sound reason.

Again, this system by allowing to us no other future existence than our unconscious absorption into the Great Whole, saps the foundations of morality, of duty, of virtue, and leaves to vice full liberty. By proclaiming the unity of matter, it obliges us to renounce the evident consciousness of our



personality and our existence, real and distinct from other beings. By going so far as to admit the identity of to be and not to be, it destroys the first principle of all reasoning and loses itself in absurdity. Then the truth escapes us, and the discouraged intellect takes refuge in universal skepticism, fatal ending to all. An example of this is the agnosticism of Huxley, who tells us that the majority of his contemporaries think that they have solved the problem of existence, whilst he is perfectly certain that he knows nothing about it, and is quite convinced that the problem cannot be solved. For that which is absolute, he says, the Thing in Itself, is unknowable. Rigorously confined within the circle of phenomena the understanding has neither the power nor the right to outstep their limits.

The answer to this is that phenomena do not constitute the sole reality. The certainty of the objective reality of things, independently of the images of them which we find in ourselves, is as much the common property of humanity as the air which we breathe. To maintain with Kant and his followers that the



absolute entirely eludes us and that we know nothing of reality, is the suicide of the understanding and the renunciation of common sense.

Vainly therefore, does skepticism rise before us the moment we approach the problem of our future destiny, trying to discourage us beforehand in all our efforts by asking: "Is it possible to arrive at the certainty of any truth whatsoever? The human intellect has already fallen into so many errors," I answer: "Intuition gives us an absolute certainty, intellectual as well as sensitive intuition. I am absolutely certain (under certain circumstances), that I have a sheet of paper before my eyes; similarly I am absolutely certain that the whole is greater than a part; that there is no effect without a cause."

If the human intellect has fallen into errors, it is because it made assertions which went beyond the range of its intuition, as when it believed that the stars were shining points fixed in a solid sphere. But intuition itself cannot deceive. That which I see, really is; that which manifests itself exists.

Let us, however, spend no further words in

refuting a system which leads only to contradictions and negations and deprives human life of all its value or meaning.

The question of our future destiny is resolved according to principles.

1. The existence of a personal God distinct from the world which He has created.

2. The existence within us of a soul spiritual and immortal.

Skepticism maintains that it is impossible to establish these two fundamental principles. We do not seek to prove that this is possible; we shall do better; we shall solidly establish these fundamental principles.

## CHAPTER VI

### EXISTENCE OF GOD—POPULAR PROOFS

#### I. THE GENERAL BELIEF OF MANKIND

**I**T is from our early teachings that we form our first ideas of God. At our mother's knee we may have learnt to join our little hands; to lisp our first prayers; to invoke the Father Who is in Heaven. Or, perhaps, a worthy school-master, a minister of religion, taught us to respect Him Who sees the most secret thoughts of our hearts; to fear Him Who will judge all men; to love Him from Whom we have received all that we have. It may be, on the contrary, that we have heard rough men blaspheming the name of God, or the impious mocking Him, cursing Him, accusing Him of injustice and cruelty, or even denying His existence with a fierce animosity which men do not display against what does not exist.

From the social circle, therefore, in which we

live, we have received the idea of a superior Being Who rules the world and on Whom we are dependent. The same may be said of all societies actually existing or which have long since vanished.

Ethnography and history prove to us that all peoples in all ages and in all countries have practiced some form of religion, and have believed in a supreme Ruler of men and of events.

"There is no nation," says Cicero, "so rude and savage as not to believe in the existence of the Gods, even though it may be mistaken as to their nature."

"You may find villages without walls, without buildings, without schools, without laws, whose inhabitants have no knowledge of writing or of money, but a people without God, without prayers, without solemn oaths, without religious rites, without sacrifices: such a people has never been seen." (Plutarch.)

"For men to be in agreement with one another, nation with nation, city with city, family with family, or even man with man: this is difficult, yet in all this great conflict



of opinions there is one point upon which all laws, all opinions, are in agreement, that there is one God, the King and Father of all." (Maximus Tyrius.)

"All those who have any understanding," says Plato, "invoke the Deity." Such is the testimony of past ages. As regards the present time, listen to the words of a learned Professor: "Obliged as I am by my office of teacher to examine critically into all the various races of mankind, I have sought amongst the most inferior peoples as well as amongst the most civilized, and nowhere have I found atheism, the negation of God, except amongst isolated individuals." (M. de Quatre Fages.)

The truth of this assertion has been denied by some superficial observers who maintain that amongst certain aborigines such as the Hottentots, the Australians, the Patagonians, they have not found any trace of religion.

This statement has been contradicted by those of greater discernment. "No matter how degraded the Hottentots may be," says Livingstone, "there is no need to prove to them the existence of God or of a future life. These



two truths are universally admitted. If you speak of them of a person who has died, 'He has gone to God,' they will reply."

The witnesses who testify that amongst the Australians there exists a belief in a "Father of all" are too numerous and too reliable to allow of any doubt being cast upon their evidence.

"It is He, the Father of all, Who lays upon men the burthen of life; He it is Whom all must acknowledge as their Master. He has made men, the animals, the trees. He is Who provides those faithful to Him with all that is necessary for their existence. At the same time He is the guardian of morality and He punishes rigorously those who violate it. Placed over the Kingdom of the Dead, He welcomes souls when they arrive there." <sup>1</sup>

Finally, the natives of Tierra-del-Fuego, south of Patagonia, speak of a big black man who wanders through the mountains, who knows everything that is said and done by men and who keeps a record of their be-

<sup>1</sup> E. Durkheim, *Les formes elementaires de la vie religieuse*. Paris, 1912.

havior, according to which he sends them fine or bad weather. He forbids murder and detests sins of lust.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly the most backward members of the human race, in as far at least as what concerns material civilization, are the Pygmies, those men of small stature called Negroes in Africa and in the Andaman Islands and the Philippines. Now, all these alike have a perfectly clear, distinct idea of a superior Being, the Master of all men to whom He has given the earth. He it is Who from time to time descends upon their camping grounds to carry away the souls of the dying.

Thus amongst all peoples we find existing the idea of God. No doubt, it is not always the refined idea of one only God, a pure spirit, infinitely perfect, such as is conceived by philosophy and the religions of civilized nations. No doubt also, there are nations who whilst believing in God render Him no worship whatever, reserving their homage and their sacrifices for inferior deities and evil spirits whose malign influence they fear. But everywhere men believe in a supernatural

<sup>1</sup> Mgr. Leroy.

power, the cause of all the phenomena of Nature and on whom all things are dependent.

"The human race *en masse* is religious. At no period of the world's history has man ever lived without religion. There is no people on earth, no matter how wretched they may be, destitute of all religious ideas. This is a point outside all discussion by the anthropologist."<sup>1</sup>

Hence, if some modern philosophers deny the existence of God, if the State affects to ignore Him and claims to instruct youth in a morality which is not founded on God, they must at least recognize that they constitute an unnatural exception to the conduct of man in every age and every part of the earth, and that they thus outlaw themselves from the human race.

That mankind should always and everywhere affirm the existence of God is a proof that God exists. To those who would maintain the contrary, we have a perfect right to reply: "Mankind hitherto has believed in the existence of God. From his first

<sup>1</sup> F. Byron Tevens, *Introduction to the History of Religions*, London, 1896.

beginning man has possessed this belief. You say, you atheists, that there is no God. It is for you to prove what you say, to prove that in the face of common sense and contrary to it, you are right." Now this proof no unbeliever has ever yet been able to furnish. At most have they been able to raise objections to the existence of God, difficulties such as that raised by the existence of evil. But these objections can be overcome—as we shall see, and even if they remained a mystery, still they would not be an argument for abandoning, because of a difficulty, a solidly established truth. No one has ever been able to prove that God does not exist.

Moreover, how is the testimony of the whole human race to be explained? If it is not an expression of the truth, to what cause of error is it to be attributed? Are we to accuse kings and legislators of having from the beginning deceived nations and invented for their own advantage an invisible ruler of whom they were the representatives? In that case the belief would have disappeared with the cause which produced it;



it would not have been continuous. Besides, we know from the most ancient historical documents that belief in God existed before ever there were kings or empires.

Could this belief spring from fear or from our passions to which it would pander? Quite the contrary: it would be to the advantage of the passions to suppress this witness, this judge and supreme avenger of sin whose existence is a restraint. Hence the wicked say in their hearts: "There is no God."

Is this belief the fruit of superstition, of ignorance, of that instinctive tendency which we have to attribute to a supernatural agency the phenomena of Nature?

If superstition is a source of error, yet is it only the exaggeration of a perfectly legitimate impulse of our soul which makes us attribute all phenomena to a cause. Far from contradicting this tendency, science makes use of it, for it is the seeking after the causes from which result the phenomena of which we are witnesses. And true science does not stop at the weak, immediate causes, but ascends to the supreme cause. Thus science in dispelling prejudice has not destroyed belief

in God. The greatest scientists, Newton, Ampère, Pasteur and so many others were deeply religious.

It would be impossible to find a cause which might not lead the whole of mankind into error regarding this capital point of the existence of God, a belief of such importance that on it depends the whole direction of our life. This belief is therefore the expression of Truth; human nature cannot universally lie. The belief of mankind in God can only be explained by an original revelation from God Himself, manifesting Himself to men, or by a spontaneous impulse of the understanding, a deduction drawn by our intellect brought face to face with the sight of the world.

In reality, belief in God springs from these two sources as we shall see.

## II. REVELATION

When it fulfills the required conditions, History is an assured source of truth. When the historian is of good faith and well informed regarding the facts of which he writes, we need not fear to accept his evidence.

Of all books the one on which we may with

most assured certainty rely is that Book of books, the Bible. The Bible is the history of God's visible operations on mankind. In it we see God manifesting Himself to the first man, instructing him in his duties. He is shown to us appearing during the course of ages to Noah, to the Patriarchs, to the Prophets through whom He makes known events which shall take place in the future, and we find these predictions afterwards fulfilled. On Mount Sinai He appears to Moses, to whom He reveals His Name, "*He Who is*," the Being by essence. He preserves His chosen people faithful to the religion which He has given them and distinctly separate from other nations until the time when He shall come Himself to teach us all truth by becoming Man under the Name of Jesus.

Jesus declares Himself God, and proves it by miracles; by His Resurrection from the dead; by predicting the future, as for instance, the approaching destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, the persecutions which His Church should suffer, and notwithstanding these the glorious growth of the grain of mustard seed which was to grow into a great tree whose

branches would afford shelter to the whole world.

The continuous existence throughout the ages of the Church in spite of the efforts of her enemies who had sworn her destruction, shows that God is with her, consequently that God exists.

To this continued miracle may be added the numerous miracles of all kinds, authenticated beyond all doubt, which are recorded in the Church's history.

The miraculous cures of Lourdes, to confine ourselves to our own times, are incontrovertible facts "coming within the domain of science," admitted even by those who do not want to acknowledge their miraculous character. There, once more in our own days as at the time of the Gospel, the lame walk; the deaf hear; the blind see; the paralyzed are cured; and immense crowds gathered from all parts of the universe sing the praises of the humble Virgin who, nineteen hundred years ago inspired by the Holy Ghost, declared that all generations should call her blessed. It is plainly a clear manifestation of the supernatural, of the divine, of God.



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Let me add the testimony of those millions of the Faithful who in all ages and in every place have invoked God in their need and who declare that their prayer was heard, that God answered their appeal. Therefore, God exists. Thus God has revealed His existence. He has worked upon the earth, He still works there every day. Man believes in God because he sees His work; the finger of God is there.

This proof is incontrovertible. For those who have witnessed this supernatural work of God, it is the most convincing of all proofs. For others it is less striking. Not everyone knows how to read the Bible and the History of the Church. But there is a book wide open before the eyes of all in which the most illiterate can see written in great characters the name of God. This book is the universe, the sight of which awakens instinctively the thought of the Creator.

### III. THE SIGHT OF THE UNIVERSE

The beauty of the world is not a modern discovery, for the ancient Greeks had already called it Cosmos, that is the Beautiful. The

Royal Psalmist says of it "The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands."

On a fine evening when the sun has gone down in splendor in the West, the stars begin to sparkle in the firmament, they ascend the horizon each one at its appointed hour, always in the same order, never failing to respond to the roll-call. Soon the moon appears, by degrees ascending in the heavens and shedding over the earth her soft silvery light; at times she pursues her solitary course through the deep blue sky, and again she seems to climb the clouds.

When morning breaks once more, the sun which had gone to rest the evening before, sinking to his couch surrounded by gold and crimson, reawakens to fresh life, his splendor softened as it were with dew, as he appears veiled in the pearly dawn; gradually he attains his full splendor, and spreads his golden rays over the surface of this globe of ours so varied and so magnificent. Here a vast plain different in all its parts, from the green prairie enameled with flowers to the fields of yellowing corn undulating in the

breeze like the waves of the ocean, from the somber masses of dark forests to the limpid lake whose crystal waters reflect the azure sky. There a peaceful valley through which meanders the murmuring silvery brook, yonder a great mountain which lifts its crest to the clouds seeming to defy the thunderbolt; here an immense ocean at one time mirror-like in its calm, and again lashed into fury by the tempest.

These aspects of nature are modified as the seasons succeed one another in the passage of the year, bringing in spring time the young leaves and first sweet blossoms after the frosts of winter, the fruits of summer and in autumn the varied tints of the changing leaves of the forest trees. Never is our charmed eye wearied by a continuous monotony. The various flowers with their thousand colors and graceful forms appear in succession from the first days of Spring to the end of Autumn, and even Winter is not wholly bare.

What a magnificent scene! Mean and poor indeed would be the soul that had never felt the beauty of Nature.

Now, if for the painting of a picture a painter is required, the picture of Nature can only be the work of an artist without equal who has known how to penetrate into the secrets of beauty, and possessed the art of realizing them. Seeing one of those beautiful artificial flowers which skilled hands produce, who would venture to say that it was the effect of chance? Now, the tiniest flower that grows is infinitely more beautiful and it is living, real.

Nature is not an inanimate picture like those of our painters. The world contains a multitude of living beings, plants, and animals. For the preservation of their life it is necessary that these beings should be nourished, that they should assimilate this nutriment, that it should become absorbed into their own substance. Now it is a marvelous fact that each being has within reach the special food necessary to its existence. Through their leaves plants draw from the atmosphere carbon and oxygen, through their roots they obtain from the earth those minerals necessary to them. For animals, more exacting in their requirements, living nutriment is nec-



essary, plants, other animals; they find such within their reach, they seize it, swallow it, digest it, and this food provides them with blood, flesh, bones. The universe is like a huge banquet at which feast millions of guests, from a blade of grass and the humble ant to the cedar of Lebanon and the lion of the desert, thus proclaiming that a good and generous Providence provides unceasingly for all their wants.

For all these beings the allotted span of life is very short. But they possess the faculty of transmitting this life to others. Plants produce seeds which scatter often over a great space, there to reproduce the species to which they belong. And that the preservation of the species may be assured, it is so arranged that the more perishable the seeds, the greater their number. Urged by an admirable instinct, animals watch over their young with the most vigilant care until such time as they are capable of taking care of themselves. Birds' nests are masterpieces. Who has taught the swallow to build along walls always sheltered from the rain, its dwelling with clay kneaded and agglutinated

in its beak and intermixed with blades of straw as cement? Who has taught the young martin to soar into space and to remain aloft for hours describing circles, and making loops, enough to excite the envy of the most skilled aviators? Who has taught the nightingale how to draw from his little throat those floods of exquisite melody?

And this art, this skill, this instinct has been transmitted throughout the ages to succeeding generations of animals; no matter how far back we trace it in Natural History, we still always find it just as perfect. And no doubt it was so in the first couple from which originated the species, when they came forth endowed with life from the hands of the Creator. In reality, for the origin of all those beings which descend by generation from one to another, we must necessarily suppose a being which was not engendered by another but which was directly created either full-grown or in the embryo state by the Supreme Master of life. A hanging chain, no matter how long it may be, must have a first link attached, not to another link, but to a fixed point. This point, fixed, absolute, is

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God. He it is Who in the small original seed has enclosed the great tree. He it is Who gives to every species the faculty of indefinite reproduction. He it is Who presides over the mystery of generation. To Him alone is known the secret of life; those who transmit it are only blind instruments in His hands.

Over all parts of the globe has He prodigally scattered this life from the lichen and the moss to the giant Sequoia of California, from the microscopic protozoa to the mammalia with such different organs.

Between all these living beings there is an admirable subordination. Every being, whilst seeking its own welfare, procures the welfare of another. Vegetables by their development and growth prepare food for the animals. Finally, all beings procure the welfare of man and seem made for Him.

The earth is our rich domain; in its bosom we find treasures which for ages it has held for us in reserve: coal, the metals, the minerals necessary for our life, for our civilization. Continents and islands have risen from the ocean and are covered with a wondrous variety of plants, alimentary, medicinal, tex-

tile, the flowers of which, after having delighted the senses with the brilliancy of their colors, the beauty of their form and the delicacy of their perfume, will be transformed into delicious fruits, in addition to which we may utilize also the leaves, the bark, the roots, all parts of the plant.

A multitude of animals grow and develop, the strength of some of which is useful to us, whilst others give us their fleece, their milk, their flesh.

Heat and cold, the sun, the rain and the winds combine sufficiently to furnish us with a favorable abode in which there is no monotony and in which our human nature, so weak in many respects, can live and flourish. Infinite Wisdom seems to have combined, foreseen and provided everything. Our nature itself is perfectly proportioned to the size of the beings which surround us. If we were of greater stature we should not find food enough to sustain us; on the other hand if we were smaller we should be devoured by other animals.

Can it be possible that all this order is the result of blind chance? The world is like a



magnificent palace in which we find collected beforehand all that is necessary to us. If the palace cannot be explained unless we admit the presence of an architect, with still stronger reason can the world not be explained if we deny the existence of God. It is vain to object that there are disorders in Nature, that there are harmful animals, noxious plants, disastrous storms, inclement weather. All this accidental disorder vanishes before the overwhelming superiority of the universal order. These are shadows which throw the lights of the picture into stronger relief. Far from being an argument against the Providence of God they do but serve to confirm it. God, it would seem, permits this disorder to show us the chaos into which without Him the world would fall. He has willed to give us a sample of what might result from that famous *chance* to which atheists attribute the existence of the universe.

In short, the beauty, the life, the order of the world afford the most irrefutable proof of the existence of a Creator, supremely intelligent and all-powerful. No argument appeals more to our common sense, it is within the

range of everyone's experience, it is easily construed and understood by the least developed understanding.

#### IV. CONSCIENCE

If from the contemplation of the exterior world we retire within ourselves, we shall find in our conscience and the law of Duty a proof no less simple and no less strong of the existence of God.

Every man who has the use of reason knows the voice of his conscience. Let us recall that moment when we were face to face with an alluring temptation. We were alone and yet a voice made itself heard within us: "Take care, that is wrong; that is forbidden," and as we felt strongly attracted by the forbidden, that same voice restrained us: "Resist that allurements; have courage; do not yield to it."

At that moment conscience spoke spontaneously. And every time that we question it as to the lawfulness of an act, conscience answers: "This is forbidden; that is permitted; that is commanded."

Conscience, therefore, reveals itself to us

like a moral light. But it also presents itself to us with the authoritative characteristics of a law of obligation; it says to us "you must; you must accomplish that action; you must refrain from such a one."

Finally, after the act conscience assumes the part of a judge who weighs the action and apports to it the reward or the punishment which it has merited. If we have listened to this voice, it says to us: "that is well; you have done your duty," and our heart is filled with interior joy, the first and most sweet reward of our good act. If, on the contrary, we have stifled the voice of conscience and proceeded to indulge ourselves, immediately it revives and in angry tones, apostrophizes us with those stinging words: "You are a coward." This is remorse whose cruel stings lacerate the sinful soul. Where is the criminal who has not known it?

And now, whence comes that delicate voice which cannot be bribed into silence?

Perhaps someone will say: it comes from education. No; conscience goes before all moral education. It is a light which every man brings with him at his coming into the

world. The savage equally with civilized man distinguishes naturally between good and evil; between what is just and unjust; what is permitted and what is forbidden. No doubt education quickens conscience, makes it tender, sensitive, but it does not create it.

No doubt, a bad education can distort the conscience, destroy its strength and hinder it from pointing out exactly what is good and what evil. Bad habits may weaken this voice, but never can they succeed in wholly silencing it, and one day or another the most deadened conscience will revive and bitterly reproach the culprit who would not listen to it. Conscience, therefore, exists prior to education; it forms a constituent part of human nature.

Moreover whence does this voice derive the characteristics of a law of obligation: *you must* do good; you *must* avoid evil? Such a command implies a master who commands. This obligation requires a legislator. Who is the master, the legislator? Is it the human society in which we live? No; because if all men were annihilated, I should still feel myself obliged to obey my conscience, and



even though there were none to witness my crime, I should still fear the punishment. Besides, what human authority could impose on all this secret and interior obligation, and throughout all ages maintain it incorruptible?

This obligation, is it self-imposed, as is claimed by the apostles of independent morality? No; because in that case I should be able to free myself from it at will. If *I* bind *myself*, then am I a free agent. Now as we have said, we cannot free ourselves from this obligation. In spite of me my conscience speaks, and afterwards expresses approval or condemnation of my action, and I am powerless to stifle remorse altogether. Hence, I do not bind myself.

No doubt, I can force myself to do such and such a thing, to make a resolution—a promise, a vow; I can refuse myself some pleasure, can inflict on myself penance with a view to the obtaining of some greater happiness. But this is not the question. The law of conscience does not consist in forcing me to impose on myself an obligation, but wholly and entirely in making *me feel that I am under*

*the obligation*—to a Being above me Who sees the most secret recesses of my heart, Who if I do wrong can make me feel the stings of remorse, or if I do right, the sense of His approval.

Therefore the authoritative character of conscience can only come from the very Author of human nature Himself, from the Supreme Legislator, from God. Without God conscience would be a tribunal without a judge. Conscience is the voice of God within us. It is by this voice that He speaks to us and guides us morally.

The moral law proves the existence of God, and one should be indeed very illogical to deny God whilst still maintaining the law of duty. Much more logical are the anarchists who, to free themselves from the law of Duty, have as their watchword "Neither God nor Master." They thoroughly understand that there is a God, that there is a duty, and conversely, if there is such a thing as duty there is a God. God and duty are two ideas which cannot be separated.

So strong is this moral proof that Kant, who has tried to undermine all the other

proofs of the existence of God, has not ventured to attack it.

God Who has written His Name on the universe, has also graven it deeply on our hearts. Our hearts instinctively turn to God. In the presence of so much iniquity which revolts us, from the tyranny which oppresses us, in the misfortunes whether deserved or undeserved in which we are plunged, instinctively we lift our thoughts to the Judge from Whom the guilty cannot escape, and we appeal to His Eternal Justice. When threatened with great danger, we invoke His all-powerful Mercy. Notorious atheists such as Littré, Cabanis, and others, in the presence of death have bowed down before God.

Thus there is within us an irresistible tendency to admit the existence of God. It is this belief in God which the child from the first dawn of reason accepts the most willingly. The impious even in those moments when the tyranny of their passions is greatest, cannot utterly tear this belief from their hearts, and it is a question whether those who call themselves atheists are really such.

This tendency, this cry of the heart cannot

deceive. God exists; there is a Creator of the world, a Supremely Intelligent Power Who governs it; there is a Legislator of Conscience; a Supreme Guardian of Moral Law.



## CHAPTER VII

### EXISTENCE OF GOD—SCIENTIFIC PROOFS

**T**HE proofs given in the preceding chapter are within the comprehension of all. But for the full understanding of those which we are now going to set forth, some general scientific knowledge will be necessary. For students this knowledge will render the reading of these proofs all the more easy and pleasant.

It has been said that a little knowledge leads us away from God whilst much knowledge leads us back to Him. We are going to show that a little knowledge leads to God, provided that it is true knowledge free from all prejudice. For instance, if we take three of the principal sciences we shall find in them the irrefutable affirmation of God.

#### I. ASTRONOMY

What a magnificent spectacle is presented to us in the starry heavens on a fine night in

Winter when the conditions permit of our seeing with the naked eye as far as the stars of the sixth magnitude! Never could one weary of contemplating them. Hence we find from the most remote ages men engaged in watching the movements of the planets. But far more admirable are the discoveries of modern astronomers aided by powerful telescopes, by the spectroscope and by learned calculations.

For a long time observers of the heavens had distinguished therein two kinds of stars: the fixed stars forming figures or constellations, seemingly never varying in form, and the planets, wandering stars whose capricious movements seemed to set all laws at defiance. Like the stars, except that they do not twinkle or scintillate, the five planets, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn move in zig-zag fashion whilst still remaining like the sun and moon within the circle of the Zodiac. In vain Ptolemy, supposing the earth to be stationary, had imagined that the planets described epicycles or small circles the centers of which would move round the earth as did the sun and the moon, accord-

ing to the belief of those days. His system did not succeed in explaining the planetary irregularities.

Copernicus (1553) was the first who was able to bring order into this seeming chaos and to give the true yet simple explanation of the movements of the stars. The earth is only a planet which like the other planets moves round the sun, the center of our world. The moon revolves round the earth which it accompanies faithfully in its orbit. The major planets have their moons also, their satellites more or less numerous. Of these Saturn has ten. The distance of these stars from the earth is inconceivable. Nearly 93 millions of miles separate the earth from the sun. When farthest from us Mars is at a distance of 240 millions of miles, when nearest he is 35 million miles from us. Jupiter is close upon 400 millions of miles distant. Saturn nearly 800 millions.

With regard to the distance of Uranus, the last planet visible with the aid of instruments, and of Neptune astronomers differ in their computations.

Conceive all these globes revolving regu-

larly in the same direction and nearly all in the same plane around the great sun which floods them with its rays of light, whilst around them with equal regularity revolve smaller globes. And at the same time each one of these globes revolves round its own axis always in the same direction, and has so revolved for ages beyond calculation without its machinery ever growing weary, ever slackening speed or going out of order.

If for the construction of a chronometer a skilled watchmaker is required, surely an all-powerful and all-wise being is required to keep in order the marvelous mechanism of our solar system.

In the regular movement of the planets and their satellites, says Newton, in their direction, their plane, their exact degree of speed corresponding to their distances, we have the traces of a design, proof of the action of a cause neither blind nor fortuitous, but which is assuredly highly skilled in mechanism and in geometry.<sup>1</sup>

But the system of Copernicus, remarkable as it is, was but an approximation. The or-

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Bentley, Vol. 4 of Works.



bits of the planets are not circles but ellipses, and their speed varies, greater at the perihelion, less at the aphelion, according to the laws so magisterially formulated by Kepler (1630). To Newton belongs the glory of being the first to discover the immediate cause of these movements. For this it suffices to admit that the sun attracts each planet with a force in proportion to the mass of the latter, and in inverse ratio to the square of the distance. Integral calculus then proves that the planet will describe a curve of the second degree, an ellipse, parabola, or hyperbola, according to the initial speed. If this speed is such that its square is equal or double the product produced by the force by the distance ( $V^2=2fd$ ) this will be a parabola, if greater, a hyperbola, if less, an ellipse and a circle in the particular case or  $V^2=fd$ . A brilliant discovery which inaugurated celestial mechanics.

But whilst admitting that the sun attracts the planets according to the law of universal gravitation, the need for a first intelligent motive power is none the less evident. Every planet must have been launched with an

initial velocity. Who gave to it this impetus? Who was it avoided giving too strong an impetus, lest the planet, describing a hyperbola, should lose itself in space far from the sun? But who was it that at the same time understood how to regulate the force of this impetus that it might be strong enough to prevent the ellipse departing too far from the circle; in which case the planet, approaching too nearly the surface of the sun, would be consumed in it? How intelligent the Being Who has measured with such wisdom this initial direction and velocity!

Pursuing these investigations still further than Newton, Laplace arrived at the hypothesis that our solar system was originally an immense nebula of fluid matter very widely spread and revolving on its own axis. Becoming cool, this nebula contracted whilst its rotatory speed increased. But this excess of speed caused the nebula in the plane of its equator to throw off fluid constellations. For a certain time these constellations revolved without breaking up, as the ring of Saturn does at present; but one day the equilibrium was disturbed, and the ring was

broken into masses which took the form of spheroids grouping themselves around the largest amongst them. In this manner the planets were formed, and certain of them whilst still gaseous in their turn by the same proceeding engendered one or more satellites, all having the same rotatory movement.

This ingenious hypothesis was improved on by Faye in order to explain why the satellites of Neptune and Uranus revolve in a contrary direction. One must admit that this theory by no means does away with the need of a Creator to create the original nebula, and to give to it its rotatory motion. And if you tell me that matter is everlasting, and that movement is essential to it, I shall answer that this hypothesis is contrary to the principle of the inertia of matter, and even were it true, how could the molecules of matter possess sufficient intelligence to combine their own movements in such a manner as to produce such a harmonious whole. Therefore the sun is not the first motive power; it does not of itself suffice to explain our solar system, nor still less the universe. For the solar system is but a small corner of the immense universe.

There are 5,000 stars visible to the naked eye, and the number of those which can be seen only with the aid of the telescope is five millions, in addition to which are the stars whose existence photography alone has revealed to us. Each one of these stars is a sun similar to ours. So enormous is their distance from us that the light of the one nearest traveling at the rate of over 186,000 miles a second would require  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years to reach us (Alpha Centauri). Thousands of years must pass before the light of the most distant star could reach the earth.

According to the correct inductions of astronomers the whole mass of these stars forms a gigantic lens—a sort of flattened ball which, seen at its greatest diameter, affords to us a view of these very numerous and near stars of the Milky Way. The dimensions of this lens are tremendous. Light would take 4,000 years to pass through it from side to side at its narrowest part and ten times longer to traverse its length. And the Milky Way does not constitute the whole universe. There are other masses of stars, of resolvable nebulae, at incalculable distances. And no



doubt there are others which have so far not come within the range of our present telescopes. What immensity! In trying to sound its depths one's brain reels.

This is not all. These millions of suns, without doubt, are surrounded by worlds of planets, each one with their satellites like our solar world. They themselves are not fixed, but change with a speed which it has been possible to measure, all probably revolving round the same axis which would be really the fixed axis of the world.

How powerful and how wise must be the author of all this! How can these enormous masses support themselves in empty space unless they are sustained by an invisible power occupying space? Why is it that in their dizzy rotation they do not burst into pieces? Is it not because a strong hand keeps their elements in check? Why is it that in their rapid course they never mistake their path? How is it that in such a prodigious variety of directions and of degrees of velocity collisions never occur? Is it not that the plane of their movements has been arranged with consummate knowledge beforehand?

Each star is a world, and each world plays its part in the whole *ensemble* with more exactitude than the wheels of the most ingenious machine, and our impotence to conceive it adequately proclaims the supreme perfection of the sublime Mechanician of the universe; of the great Admiral who directs the movements of the luminous ships of the heavens.

The last word has not yet been said. Scientific truth obliges us to acknowledge that the motion of the planets is not as simple as we have shown; we have somewhat exaggerated its simplicity. In reality, the orbits of the planets are not mathematical ellipses; their plane is not fixed; the perihelion changes; the line of the points at which the orbit of the planets intersect the plane of the ecliptic moves backwards; the eccentricity diminishes; the small axis increases continually. If we say that the planets describe ellipses we must add that they are perpetually varying ellipses. It is sought to explain these irregularities by the attraction of the other planets. Our satellite the moon presents anomalies in explanation of which no theory has yet been formed; this is the problem of the three

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bodies the integral of whose differential quantities has not yet been found. On the other hand, great as has been the advance in stellar astronomy, several of its inductions so far are but hypotheses.

What does this prove? That astronomy has still to make further progress; has to discover other laws. It is even yet a very remarkable fact that amidst all the irregularities of the planets the length of the great axis of their orbit, and consequently the duration of their sidereal revolutions, has remained unchanged throughout the ages and thus assures the stability of the system. Just reflect that if by the touch of a magic thumb our earth were driven ever so little outside its orbit and nearer to the sun, the centripetal force would exceed the centrifugal, and our planet drawing nearer and nearer to the sun would after describing a dizzy making spiral curve be engulfed in it.

How then in this wondrous steadiness can we fail to recognize the guiding hand of Him Who preserves the universe?

The more wonders Science discovers, the more she will proclaim the perfection of their

Author. The world is more complicated than we imagine. But the more complicated the universe in its entirety, the more we must recognize the Power and Wisdom of Him Who rules it.

## II. PHYSICAL SCIENCE

That the world has had a beginning is proved by thermodynamics. We know that motion can be converted into heat, and conversely heat may be converted into the energy of motion. A musket ball stopped by the blindage becomes heated to fusing point; the heat of the firebox of the engine causes the train to move. And in this transformation the energy, that is to say the cause which produces motion, heat, electricity, etc., is preserved under all its divers forms. This is the principle of the conservation of energy, the fundamental law of thermodynamics. But there is another principle not less fundamental, Carnot's principle, which is: Whilst force and working power are found integrally in heat, heat cannot by an inverse transformation be converted entirely into force, into motion. For the con-



version of heat into motion, a certain amount of heat must be lost. Thus, the vapor which escapes from the cylinder after having acted on the piston still retains some of the heat drawn from the firebox and which is lost in the atmosphere. In other terms, to retrieve some of the working power—one must be content to make a certain amount of heat pass from a hot source to a cold receiver. All the heat produced by the fall of a stone cannot produce working power sufficient to lift the stone to the point whence it fell. From this it results that in consequence of the incessant transformations taking place on our globe the total amount of mechanical energy in it is continually growing less, whilst the heat tends to equalize itself, to distribute itself uniformly through all the bodies. This is the law of the *degradation of energy*: the earth is cooling and its motion is growing less. A legitimate induction permits us to extend this law to the solar world, and to say that the sun itself is cooling. No doubt this has not been verified during the course of the historic period. This process of cooling is very slow, counter-

balanced as it is by the heat produced by chemical action and the incessant fall on its surface of corpuscles. Moreover the presence in the Polar regions of fossilized plants such as only grow in tropical heat, permits of the inference that in the carboniferous epoch the Pole was warmed by a larger sun whose rays were hotter and less oblique.

Science therefore may without fear uphold the law of the degradation of energy. The earth is cooling and tends to become fixed—immovable.

From the statement of science, an easy exercise of reason at once permits the conclusions:

1st. That the world will come to an end. That without the intervention of an external cause, it will end in cold and inertia.

2d. That the world had a beginning. For it is impossible to trace back *ad infinitum* the beginning of this degradation of energy, because in that case it would be now complete, and the world would be dead long ago.

Fix the beginning of the world at a period removed from us by as many ages as you will,

still those ages, however great their number, are finished. The world had a beginning. If the world had a beginning, then it has a Creator.

### III. THE SCIENCE OF BIOLOGY

How has life appeared upon this world of ours? In the Cambrian rocks which are the oldest sedimentary strata, we find fossilized remains: the earliest forms of life, annelidæ, polyps, graptoliths belonging to the lowest grade in the animal scale.

But whence did these come?

The extreme advocates of evolution claim that life originated in inert matter by means of simple physico-chemical action, and that afterwards developing of itself has produced every living species from the most imperfect to the highest form, from the Bathybius to man. But it has been proved that Huxley's famous Bathybius was only a gelatinous precipitate of mineral matter, and M. Ledue has been obliged to admit that its pseudo-living formations were only crystallizations. Pasteur's experiments have not been falsified; they establish positively that the living can

only proceed from a living being. And as at the beginning of the geological era life did not exist on the earth owing to its very high temperature, it results that the first living thing which we find on it must have been brought from elsewhere; the first germs of life must have been created on it.

Without a Creator the existence of life is inexplicable. But the science of biology proves to us on other grounds the existence of God. It reveals to us in living beings a marvelous assemblage of organs, of functions, of actions which are manifestly means destined to an end. Now, a means can only be ordained to an end by an intelligent cause. Therefore, there is a supreme Intelligence Who has created and Who governs the living world. A first law of life is: that it is transmitted by the union of two sexes. If we except certain vegetables which germinate from a spore and certain cases of parthenogenesis amongst animals, bees for instance, it is by the fusion of a mature female—with a male element proceeding usually from a different individual, that the ovule is transformed into a complete egg, capable of development and



the beginning of new living being. Now it seems indeed that a Providence Who wills that life should multiply itself abundantly, assures this fusing of sexual elements. We shall find the proof of this in the manner which plants are fertilized.

The female element, the ovule, is enclosed in the ovary, a sort of hollow box at the base of the pistil that green elongate part which forms in the center of the flower. The male element, the pollen, is formed in the anthers placed at the end of the stamen. How are they united?

As a general rule the pollen does not fertilize the ovules of the *same* flower. For, when they are both found in the one plant, it usually happens that they do not come to maturity at the same time, when the pollen is ripe, the ovule is not yet fit for fertilization. Hence in most cases the pollen is transferred from one flower to another by various means, the wind playing a very important part in the process. But still more important agents in the fertilization of plants are insects. Attracted by their brilliant color and perfume, the insects whilst seeking the nectar stored

in the flower come into contact with the anthers and thus carry away on their bodies some of the pollen which adheres to the stigma of the next plant which they visit.

The stigma is intended to receive the pollen grains, and is a viscous struma at the top of the style. The pollen nourished by the glutinous secretion in the stigma at once swells, develops and produces the slender tube known as the pollen tube which grows down into the style and enters the ovary. One of the two generative nuclei of the pollen grains becomes fused with the nucleus of the oosphere which thus becomes the fertilized oospore. This process of fertilization produces a change in the ovary which becomes enlarged and forms the fruit. A new plant is thus engendered and only awaits favorable conditions to germinate and to reach maturity. It may be years, a century may elapse, before this happens. But for its proper development it is necessary that the new plant should separate from that whence it sprung. The ripe fruit, therefore, falls from the plant, and if it contains several seeds it opens and the seeds fall out, thus ensuring their dissemination

and at the same time preventing the crowding of the young plants upon one another when germinating.

In certain species of plants, such as the dandelion, the cotton plant, the seeds are provided with a tuft of light downy hairs which are carried to a distance by the wind. Of course, many seeds fail to find favorable soil for germination and are lost, but they are so numerous that there are always some which succeed, and thus there is no danger of the species becoming extinct. In many cases, notably in that of the balsam plant and the wood-sorrel, the force with which the fruit bursts scatters the seeds to a considerable distance.

For their growth and nutriment plants require roots and leaves. Now during germination the young plant has neither, but Providence has surrounded it with one or two large cotyledons, a kind of huge leaf which contains a reserve of food upon which it feeds until such time as it has acquired, like full-grown plants, roots and leaves.

For the preservation of life plants need water which contains mineral salts and car-

bon and oxygen which latter constitute the greater part of their cellulose.

By means of the roots they draw the mineralized water from the soil, the roots being provided for this purpose with absorbent hairs which suck up the water through their fine membrane. To find its food the root must bury itself deep in the earth, but tender as it is, to obviate any danger of injury during this process of burrowing, it is protected at the extremity by a calyptra or hood of a harder substance.

In certain plants there accumulates in the tubers a store of nutriment upon which the plant feeds in time of want. The sap, a fluid like water, passes up through the plant, is driven with force into the capillary vessels of the alburnum, then into the branches, the petiole, or leaf-stalk, the veins of the leaf and finally its parenchyma in which is found chlorophyll, the material to which is due the green color of plants. The chlorophyll when brought into contact with the air which has entered the leaf through numerous apertures or stomata affects a profound change in the sap, which loses the water and becomes concentrated.



The carbonic acid gas of the atmosphere enters the leaf through the stomata, and being dissolved in the sap enters into the protoplasm of the cells. Under the influence of light the chlorophyll decomposes the carbon dioxide, and the oxygen, liberated from the carbon and the water, is returned to the air. From the carbon which remains in the sap are formed various compounds, sugar, amides, starch, odoriferous essences, organic-mineral compounds.

The sap thus modified again circulates through the plant, and passing through other vessels descends into the *liber* or inner bark so as to spread everywhere for the nourishment of the plant. Between the *liber* and the sap-wood there is a zone of cells which in spring become vitally active, this is the cambium zone which every year forms on its interior a fresh ring of sap-wood, and on its exterior a fresh ring of liber.

At the side of the sap-bearing vessels, other cells elongated in form and with thick walls form fibers which give solidity to the stem.

Some stems are climbing, and certain leaves are transformed into *rootlets* (as in the ivy)

or into *tendrils* (as in the Sweet Pea) so as to allow of the stems clinging to supports.

How wondrously is this whole organism arranged and all these operations combined to ensure the preservation and development of the plant!

How wonderful are the organs by means of which animal life is assured in all its perfection!

Is there for instance a more perfect organism than that of the human body?

Our bones with their flexible joints form for our body a frame at once solid and flexible in every sense. By the muscles and the tendons or sinews we are enabled to move our limbs. The motor nerves transmit to the muscles the orders of the brain, and the sensory nerves carry to the brain the impressions received by the senses.

The blood circulates through the heart, the arteries, the capillaries, bringing the necessary nutriment to each living cell, and carrying away the dead tissue and the dissolved alimentary matter.

The stomach, the intestines, the whole digestive apparatus is for the purpose of trans-

forming the food into blood, into red and white corpuscles.

The lungs are made to allow the hæmoglobin to seize oxygen of the atmosphere.

The white corpuscles of the blood have the property of being excited by the presence of a strange body, and of then secreting a substance which precipitates the fibrine of the blood, causes its coagulation and thus stops hæmorrhage in the case of wounds.

The blood is a chemical composition of astonishing stability due to the liver which acts as regulator by its glycogenic function; to the kidneys which eliminate the salts in excess;—to the anti-toxins which the blood itself produces to neutralize the effects of every kind of poison—finally to the phagocytes which absorb and destroy the microbes.

Long ago Galen said "Every element of the body is admirably adapted to its function." Every anatomical arrangement has a part to play. Everything in our body is arranged to assure life and the best life possible.

On the other hand, what perfection in the organs by which we establish our relations with the external world, the organs of sense!

The eye is an optical apparatus most perfectly constructed for the mechanism of vision. The crystalline lens fulfills the functions of a double convex lens, the muscles serving as screws by means of which it is adjusted to the focus. The optic nerve by conveying to the brain the impressions produced on the retina by the vibrations of the luminiferous ether enables us to perceive external objects, and all the varying shades of color.

The ear, perhaps, is even still more marvelous. By means of its 3000 corticose fibers stretched like piano-wires, it analyzes every sound, and in the vibration set up by a mere little phonographic plate, it will distinguish the sounds of the various instruments in an orchestra and of the human voice with their different *timbres* and their slightest nuances.

Like the organ which perceives sounds, the organ which produces them is of rare perfection. The vocal chords are arranged to give to the human voice a marvelous flexibility.

The same perfection is found in animals



whose organs are wondrously adapted to the functions which they have to discharge.

The feathers which form the bird's wing turn on their own axis like the laths of a Venetian blind. Whilst in a horizontal position during the downward flight so that the bird may be supported by the air, in the ascending movement of the wing they assume a vertical position so as to allow the air to pass between them, thus preventing the bird from descending again. To move its wings, the bird needs powerful muscles; to give these muscles sufficient fulcrum, the breast is provided with a bone. Those birds which do not fly have no breast bone. What perfection in the flight of birds! They defy our most skilled constructors of aeroplanes, and our most daring aviators. And they are not exposed like these to the danger of falling at every moment, and of being dashed to pieces in their fall.

With regard to fishes, whose bodies are admirably formed for movement in the water, we have to remark a derogation in their favor from the general law of the refrigeration of liquids. In general when a liquid

cools, it contracts, becomes denser, until it solidifies. If this were the case with water, what would happen during severe winters in our lakes and rivers? In contact with the air their surface would cool, and the water becoming denser would fall to the bottom where would accumulate a layer growing colder and colder, and the solidification commencing at the bottom would spread by degrees to the surface. The whole mass of the pond or river would be but a block of ice containing within it the dead fish.

But by a singular exception, water as it cools only contracts at the temperature of 4 degrees, below that it increases in bulk; at 4 degrees it reaches its maximum of density. Thus when a mass of water cools, at 4 degrees the molecules fall to the bottom and remain there. The superficial layers continuing to cool to zero, solidify; but the deeper layers now at 4 degrees remain liquid, protected from further cooling by the layer of ice which is a bad conductor, and the fortunate fish continue to swim therein whilst awaiting the spring-time.

With regard even to *minerals* chemistry

teaches us that substances unite in exact proportions always the same to *form* the same bodies.

But I must keep within bounds. All natural science is but one protracted proof that everything in Nature works with a view to an end. We do not always know what this end is; it is for science by patient investigation to arrive at the discovery; but, meanwhile our ignorance only proves the limits of our understanding.

With Spinoza, Epicurus, and Darwin, it is objected that this finality is only apparent. "We assign," they say, "to natural agents our purpose and our method of acting with intention; but, in reality, this marvelous adaptation of living organs is only a happy success in the midst of countless failures. It is the effect of chance." I shall not pause to reply at length to an objection which is so utterly opposed to common sense. To maintain that a bird's wings are not marvelously formed for the purpose of flight, but that the bird flies because it finds that by chance it has wings, is as if one said that Bleriot did not construct his monoplane and set his motor

going with the intention of crossing the Channel, but that one fine morning, finding himself on a monoplane capable by chance of traveling through the air, he crossed the Channel.

How can anyone attribute to chance the wondrous and constant order in the universe? If the letters of the alphabet were thrown into the air, would they, in falling, so arrange themselves as to compose a literary master-piece. And if the impossible could happen once, by what marvelous effect of chance could it continue to occur?

Now, following a law as fixed as it is admirable, the wonders of nature continually recur. And yet people would fain try to make out that this is the effect of chance, that is to say of nothing, for chance does not exist. This is but a negation, as much as to say that there are effects without a cause.

Side by side, with bricks taken from the same pile, are built a manufactory and a dwelling house. How is it that these same bricks form here a manufactory, there a house? Every sensible man will answer: Because the manufactory and the house have



both been previously planned by an architect who carries out his plan, building the first here, the second there.

Every living body results from a series of successive cellular bipartition (Epigenesis). The initial cell, egg, or spore fed by nutriment divides into two cells which are joined together, these in turn again divide into two, and so on with the rest. At the same time that they are thus multiplied, the cells differ from one another in such a way as to form the various organs of the animal or plant. How comes this difference?

How does the plant which sucks from the earth and the air the same juices choose what it wants to form here a stem, there a leaf, here a root, there a flower and then a fruit? How does successive cellular bipartition give to the animal, in one instance a stomach, in another a brain, in another a muscle, here a nerve, a tooth, there an egg?

Reason compels us to answer: Because an Intelligence has previously planned this plant, this animal, with all its various parts and has the power to carry out the plan.

In a general way, the world is an assem-

blage of means ordained to ends which are themselves means to attain to other ends.

Now all this requires an intelligent cause. Intelligence alone can see in the means the end to which it is destined to attain.

What is this powerful intelligence? Obviously, it is not the initial cell, it is not the body which is to be formed, for that does not yet exist, it is not the father, the mother, who are merely blind instruments.

It can be only an intelligence outside and above the world. We shall draw the same conclusions from the perfect instinct of animals.

Animals themselves have no understanding, although they sometimes seem as if they had. An animal arranges in a wonderful way the means by which it will attain its end, (the spider's web with its sticky threads is admirably adapted to catch flies) but it does not know the relation of the means which it arranges to the end to be attained. The proof of this is that it does not vary its methods when a change of circumstances requires it. I shall only quote one example of this, observed by the learned entomologist, H. Fabre.

There is a little insect of the hymenoptera species, which stores a provision of honey in a sort of a reservoir which it first builds with dried mud. M. Fabre with a fine needle made in this reservoir a small hole through which flowed the honey. And, meanwhile, the stupid insect continued to fill this sieve of the Danaides. A little earth would have been sufficient to plug the orifice. Would not the insect have done this if it had the least intelligence? From this and numerous other similar instances we may conclude that animals have only instincts. The representative ideas which the animal has of things are preserved in its imagination; they are associated with one another; succeed one another, and cause the animal to pass from one act to another without knowing why. The sensation of hunger drives it to seek its prey in order to appease this hunger. But it has no idea of preserving its own existence, nor of generation for the preservation of its species. There are many insects, the male of which die immediately after fecundation and the female after laying-time, before the eggs are hatched. They will

never see their progeny. And yet the most tender mother could not provide more intelligently for the beloved child which she expects. An animal does all this, instinctively. It obeys blindly its instinct which is perfect from the beginning. It makes no conscious, thoughtful, calculated progress. The ways of animals in our day are identical with those of the animals in the time of Aristotle or in the most far-away days in Egypt. An animal, therefore, is directed, without knowing it, by a superior intelligence.

We have but to conclude. The wondrous adaptations of means to an end which we see in the world can only be explained by the existence of a superior intelligence, ordaining and ruling the universe. This intelligence always acts of itself. For, if it had within itself potentiality, as power is ordained to the act, another superior intelligence would be necessary to explain the bringing of its power into act. That superior intelligence then would be God; or else we fall into the absurdity of proceeding thus indefinitely.

If this intelligence is a pure act, it is infinitely perfect, it is God. And the learned



entomologist whom I have already quoted might well cry out at the close of his studies, "No longer do I want *to believe* in God, for I *see* Him." There is therefore a God Who governs the world with a wisdom, a skill, a certainty of execution as admirable in the smallest insect as in the regular motion of the planets.

It is He who having given me existence, preserves it to me; Who causes my heart to beat within my breast; Who by the circulation of the blood and the renewal of my organs, maintains, without any thought on my part, life in my whole body. It is He Who gives me the power of thinking and of willing; it is He Who directs me to the end for which He created me.

Yes, there is a God, Who governs the world with a wisdom, a skill, a certainty of execution as admirable in the smallest insect as in the regular movements of the planets.

Such is the supreme affirmation of true science.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EXISTENCE OF GOD—PHILOSOPHICAL PROOFS

**W**E have proved that there is an intelligent Being Who is the Creator, Ordinator, and Wise Ruler of this world, the supreme Legislator of the Universe, and especially of conscience. We must now go farther and prove that this Being is infinitely perfect. We shall establish this by metaphysical reasoning as exact and close as the reasoning of mathematicians, although it may not perhaps be as obvious to minds which are not accustomed to do without the aid of the imagination. Mathematicians, no doubt, reason on quantities abstract but imaginable, on extent and number, whilst the metaphysician argues on Being and its transcendent properties, which lie beyond the reach of the imagination. But if the metaphysician is debarred the use of

imagination, and cannot see in terms of space like the geometrician, none the less does he reason accurately

As the basis of our demonstration, we admit as evident two facts and one principle:

1st Fact. The existence of the world.

2nd Fact. The distinction in beings between the substance and the accidents, that is to say, between the being as permanently itself and the qualities more or less transient with which it is invested.

For example, that man of 70 is the same being that was at one time four years old. That little plant which one day came forth from an acorn is now a great oak; the block of ice which the sun has transformed into vapor is the same water.

The Principle. The principle is that of causality or sufficient reason, which may be enunciated in several ways, but of which the fundamental form is as follows:

Everything which has a beginning has a cause. This principle must necessarily be admitted by every reasonable man, learned or ignorant. Science, does it not consist in the search for the cause of phenomena?

The savant, therefore, by the very act of investigating, admits that every phenomenon has its cause. This principle is so clear that it enlightens and guides the intelligence of the most ignorant man unknown to himself, as light illumines and guides our eyes.

If anyone refused to admit these two facts and this principle, we should not try to argue with him or to prove anything to him. But he would have to acknowledge that he was acting contrary to common sense and the clearest reason.

So much being granted, we shall now prove from the world itself that everything in it changes, is caused, is contingent and imperfect. Hence we shall conclude that for all this there is required a Being immutable, not caused, indispensable, perfect.

#### I. THERE EXISTS A FIRST MOTIVE-POWER, IMMOBILE, IMMUTABLE

The world is the scene of perpetual movement. Matter is animated with local motion of which it is not the cause, for the fundamental principle of our mechanics is that of the *inertia of matter*, according to which the



material molecule can neither move itself nor modify the motion given to it. Therefore, the motion has a cause outside the matter which is subject to it. This cause is called a *force*.

Moreover, everything is subject to change, either slow or rapid. Minerals disintegrate; plants become covered with leaves, flowers, fruit; animals increase in bulk. In our mind we perceive a continual procession of passing thoughts, desires, volitions, sentiments.

All these changes require a cause. This cause, is it the substance, the being which is subject to them? Yes, in certain cases. An animal moves itself, I make myself learned, virtuous. But in no instance is the being the whole, adequate, and perfect cause of the changes in itself. For instance, the animal moves because it is driven by hunger. I work to become learned, virtuous, moved by some motive such as the beauty of knowledge or of virtue.

In these cases and in every other similar one, a being only moves in as much as it is composed of two parts, one of which moves the other; the nerves move the muscles,

the soul moves the body. But the motive part is itself moved. Thus in acts reflex or involuntary, the sensor nerves have been excited by external impressions. In voluntary actions my will is moved by the attraction of a good to be attained.

Speaking in general, every being which changes, which acquires a new quality, should necessarily receive it from another being who has this quality *formally*, in the same form or *pre-eminently*, that is to say in a superior form including and advantageously replacing the first. A body can only become heated under the influence of a body already heated or containing energy in a superior form, mechanical, electric, chemical. And the reason is that to acquire a quality we must first be wanting in it, and if we are wanting in it, we cannot give it to ourselves. The greater of itself does not proceed from the lesser. On the contrary, to give a quality one must first possess it in some manner. One cannot give what one does not possess. Therefore one cannot, by the same action, give and receive the same thing.

Now if this mover is not immobile, if it is

moved itself by another, we must seek higher for the supreme cause of the movement. But the series of these motive-powers, each one of which is insufficient, cannot be carried higher indefinitely. Their assembled whole would be quite as insufficient, as an assembly of idiots would be insufficient, to make an intelligent man. If every motive-power receives the movement which is transient, that does not explain the movement. Without a main-spring or without weights a clock would not go even if it had an infinite number of wheels. Hence it is absolutely necessary that there should be a first motive power which is immovable. As M. Poincaré has justly observed, movement cannot be conceived except in connection with some thing supposed immovable. It implies, finally, something really immovable. And whilst understanding movement in its most general meaning, every change of quality requires a first cause possessing pre-eminently all the qualities which it communicates.

This first motive-power is not only really immovable, not only does it not change, but it is immutable, it cannot change. For it

could only change under the action of a superior motive-power. Now, there is none, for it is the first. It is therefore pure action without any admixture of potentiality. This first motive-power, present everywhere, acts in everything. It operates with the second cause in everything that is positive in this world. It is this which preserves to us life and movement, which co-operates all the acts of our understanding and of our will, which co-operates with us in all our actions; our free-will in no way diminishing his necessary and all-powerful co-operation

## II. THERE EXISTS A FIRST CAUSE, WHICH HAS NO CAUSE

We have proved that there is a first immutable motive power the cause of all the *changes* which are incessantly taking place in permanent substances. We shall now prove that there is an efficient first cause of these substances themselves. In fact these substances have not always existed; living beings, for example, have received life from other beings of the same nature which have preceded them.



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Now these beings which hand down the torch of life, are not themselves the perfect and efficient first cause of this life; they received it from their parents, and in transmitting it they are but blind instruments. Therefore they do not suffice for the explanation of life, even if they were, by some impossibility infinite in number. Hence there must be beyond and above all generations, a superior cause of life, of existence, and lastly a first cause Who has not received existence from another but Who exists of Himself and by Himself and Who is able to give existence to everything that exists.

### III. THERE EXISTS A BEING, ETERNAL, NECESSARY

The beings which exist cannot all be contingent, that is to say they cannot all of themselves be indifferent to existence or non-existence, nor can they decide to exist or not to exist. For in that case who or what would have determined them to exist?

There is therefore a necessary being for Whom it is impossible not to exist, Who exists of Himself by His own nature, a Being

of whom the conception, the idea implies existence.

On the other hand, suppose that at some moment there was nothing. Then there would never have been anything.

Therefore, there is an *Eternal* being. This Being, necessary, eternal, is not the whole of the world, for all the beings in the world are contingent, decaying, and collectively are as unworthy of existence as they are individually, as is each individual in particular.

Neither is the first matter essentially passible, subject to perpetual change, divisible into parts, of which not one is necessary.

The necessary Eternal Being is above the world.

#### IV. THERE EXISTS A BEING INFINITELY PERFECT

Perfection is the state of the being to whom nothing is wanting of that which it should have according to his nature. Infinitely perfect is He Who is absolutely wanting in nothing, Who has eminently all real or possible perfections.

This being exists. We can conclude this from our first proposition relative to the first motive-power. The first immutable mover

is infinitely perfect, if He were not so, He would be able, by the act of making Himself, to change, and thus would not be immutable. But let us demonstrate this clearly. Let us remark first, that there are qualities which do not admit of increase or diminution, but which are indivisible. Such are the specific qualities which constitute each individual of its particular species and make of it a lion, an oak, a man. It is not of these qualities that we are going to reason.

There are others which we find the same in different subjects but in different degrees, as strength, intelligence, beauty, virtue, or again truth, kindness, life.

Strength, for example, is greater in an ox than in a donkey, and less than in an elephant. Intellect is keener in an academician than in a savage. It is the same with beauty, goodness, justice. Through all living species life manifests itself more and more perfect, from the mushroom to man whose mortal and intellectual life raises incomparably above the most perfect animal.

Now if a quality which admits of diminution or increase as justice, keenness of intellect,

is found in varying degrees in different subjects, we can affirm that no one has it from himself. For in that case why should he not have it in a greater degree, why should he not have it in perfection? It would be impossible to find a reason for such limitation. The subject therefore has received his quality from another than himself, and, lastly, he has received it from a Being Who has this quality in perfection, or rather Who is this perfection Himself. The imperfect supposes the perfect as the lesser supposes the greater. There is a Being therefore Who is the Cause of all created perfections, Who possesses in an eminent and infinite manner all real, existing perfections.

He has also all *possible* perfections, for a perfection can only be realizable, possible, in a first cause Who possesses it eminently and can realize it.

This Being is infinitely perfect, nothing can limit His perfections. For if anything limited Him there would be something independent of Him, He would be no longer the Being, first, absolute.

This infinitely perfect Being is God. He



is infinite Beauty, Goodness, Truth. He is the Supreme Beauty of Whom all created beauty is but a faint reflection.

He is the first and Sovereign Good, infinitely to be desired, and the Source of all good.

He is also the first eternal Truth, the source of all truth in which our understanding participates.

Our understanding is governed by great principles which are given to it, geometrical axioms, moral and metaphysical truths, such as: Two things which are equal to a third are equal to each other; the whole is greater than its part; every effect has a cause; we must do good and evil. I conceive of these truths that they are necessary; I am sure that they would still be true even if I were no longer in existence to perceive them, even if no human being existed, even if all created intelligence had been annihilated. These truths, therefore, must subsist eternally true in an Intelligence, supreme, necessary, eternal, in God.

Let us sum up the conclusions which we have demonstrated. Above the world there

exists an immutable Cause of all movement, a first Cause, existing of itself, of all existence, a Being, necessary, eternal, infinitely perfect, the source of all beauty, all goodness, all perfection, Whom we call God.

We shall now deduce from this some important conclusions as to the nature and the attributes of God.

#### V. GOD IS ABSOLUTELY SIMPLE

In God there cannot be any composition. In Reality composition so-called is the union of parts in themselves distinct. Now these parts distinct in themselves are not united parts. Their union requires a cause other than the compound which they are to form.

Now God, the Being Who exists of Himself, is the first Being Who has no Cause. He is, therefore, necessarily simple. From this we conclude that God is not a body which is composed of material molecules. He is not composed of substance and of accidents, nor of power nor of act, nor of essence, nor existence. All in Him is substantial, is pure act; His essence is to exist, to be; He is the Being subsistent.

## VI. THERE IS BUT ONE GOD

If there were several, each one should be distinguished from the others by something, some quality peculiar to himself alone superadding to the divine common nature. Now that is impossible, for this quality, being compounded with the nature, would introduce composition into God Who is absolutely simple. Further, this quality would add something to the divine nature, which is absurd, it being already infinitely perfect.

## VII. GOD IS PERSONAL

Personality is the manner of existence peculiar to a complete spiritual substance which is free to act as it pleases. Whilst several individuals may have the same nature, personality cannot be shared with others.

Personality being a perfection, it cannot be denied to God. On the other hand, God is not united to the world as a soul is united to its body, in such a manner as to form with it but one substantial whole. For as the whole is more perfect than each of its parts, this union with the world would make God more perfect, which is impossible.

God is distinct from the world of which He is the efficient and exemplary Cause, but He has neither its matter nor form.

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We do not intend to establish or to study the attributes of God: His Eternity, Immen-sity, All-powerfulness, Goodness, Holiness, Mercy, etc. All these result from His infinite perfections. But for our purpose it will be useful to say a few words on the Knowledge, the Will and the Providence of God.

1. We cannot doubt that God possesses perfect knowledge. In the first place, He has a perfect knowledge and understanding of Himself; He knows all His creatures, their actions, their will whether good or evil, their desires, their thoughts. He knows each thing, even the very least, in particular. At one glance, He sees the past, the present, and the future. All things are present to Him. He beholds them in His decree of calling into existence certain possible things, of causing them to pass from possibility to reality without changing their nature.

The prescience of God does not destroy



human free-will, no more than the glance of a spectator prevents the free-will of the action of which he is witness. God knows in His own essence all things possible, inasmuch as they are possible imitations of His essence, not excepting the actions which men might do of their own free will and which they will never do.

2. In all that concerns the will, as God is the first motive-power of the world, the first Cause of all that is formed, and without Whose assistance nothing can be made, and as on the other hand God evidently wills all that He does, it results that God wills without exception all that exists positively in this world. Does it follow that He wills the violation of Justice, Sin?

No; for sin in as much as it is sin is not anything positive; it is rather a negation, a deprivation, an imperfection in the human will which knows not how to raise itself to the accomplishment of the divine will, but stops at an inferior good and which, in order that it may enjoy this good, turns away from God.

The tendency of our will towards good in

general is produced and willed by God, but the weakness which causes us to prefer a created good to the Creator, the want of virtue in our failing will, is something negative which does not need God as its Author.

Sin is the sole thing which God *permits* without willing it. As for the consequences of sin, sufferings, death, etc.; these, so far as they are positive things, are willed by God because of the great good which He causes to result from what seem to us only evils: the re-establishment of justice, expiation, purification, merit, etc.

### 3. Nothing escapes Divine Providence.

God, Who is supremely wise and Intelligent, in the creation of the universe proposed to Himself a certain end, and after having created it, He did not abandon it to itself, but continued to govern it in such a manner as may realize the end He had in view in its creation. He governs it by His Providence, and guides each creature, even the least, by the means which He has chosen to their destined end. He watches over all His creatures even in the least details, but more specially over Man, the noblest of all His works.

Nothing is the result of chance, which is but a name for our ignorance regarding the hidden causes of events. The Providence of God leaves nothing unconsidered in His wise and sure calculations. Even the disorders resulting from our free-will have been foreseen, and become factors in the general order.

We shall not further develop this subject of rational theology; what we have said suffices for our purpose.

We shall now reply to the arguments of unbelievers against the existence of God.

## CHAPTER IX

### ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

**I**N this chapter we approach our subject without the least apprehension, not only because we are convinced that we have demonstrated beyond refutation the existence of God, but also because on the confession of unbelievers themselves the arguments against His existence have no real weight.

In his book "Atheism," M. Le Dantec makes this interesting admission:

"In these days, no matter what is said, atheists are in a very small minority. I shall give my reasons for not believing in God, but I do not conceal from myself how futile they are."

The strongest arguments might, at most, cause doubts as to God's existence, but they could not definitely prove that He does not exist.



However, as belief in what we desire is always easy, the atheist may possibly succeed in convincing himself that there is no God. Therefore it will not be unprofitable to examine his arguments and to refute them.

### I. WE HAVE NEVER SEEN GOD

In the first place, we have to contend with materialists who admit the existence of nothing outside matter, and who believe in nothing but what they see. You say: "There is a God." "Well," they retort, "I have never seen Him."

To this popular objection it is easy to answer that there are things which we do not see, and which yet exist, many things which are not heard or felt, which we cannot touch, and yet their existence is certain. Our senses only perceive the phenomena, and not the substances themselves which are the cause. And yet these substances exist: that is clearly manifest. We see whiteness; we taste sweetness; we inhale perfume; we can affirm that there is underlying these phenomena a substance that is white, sweet, perfumed, but we do not perceive this substance in itself.

We observe effects, and we are certain that they have a cause which we do not see.

Have you ever seen the magnetic force of the magnet which attracts iron? the electricity which passing through a wire causes the tram-car to move? And yet the magnetism and the electricity exist.

It is the same with universal attraction. You feel that an object is hot, but the heat in itself, have you seen it? We see luminous or illuminated objects, but the light itself, no one knows what it is. Do you see honor, virtue, justice, courage? And yet that all these exist is undeniable. Our understanding tells us that the world has a cause. We affirm the existence of this cause without wanting to see. Corporeally, God, having no body, cannot be perceived by any one of our senses. He shows Himself to us in His acts—the visible Universe, He shows Himself to us also in His supernatural manifestations; the visions and the miracles with which certain souls have been favored are incontestable.

II. SCIENCE IS VERY WELL ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE  
WORLD WITHOUT GOD

Therefore God is not needed; He does not exist.

It suffices, we are told, to suppose in the beginning an assemblage of material molecules animated by vibratory movements, endowed with the forces of attraction and repulsion. These molecules have arranged themselves and so have formed the stars, the sun, the planets, our earth and all that is on it. By degrees inert matter was organized, and became plants, animals, man himself, who is but a perfected ape or ourang-outang. In the course of ages man's intellect developed; he became polished, civilized. He will continue to progress indefinitely; he will become more and more educated, virtuous, happy; he will find the secret of doing away with death; he will become God. God is, in fact, the world continuing to become more and more perfect, and ending by being infinitely perfect. We reply that this ingenious theory is but a hypothesis. Even were it proved to be possible, yet that would not prove that things have really happened thus.

The theory of Creation would still retain all its possibility, and even its necessity. In truth, how can we explain the existence of this alleged primal matter endowed with movement and forces? It will be said that matter is necessary, everlasting. But this is absurd. For matter is composed of parts, no one of which is necessary. How then could they be so in their entirety?

On the other hand, to suppose that life is but a particular manifestation of physico-chemical forces is a hypothesis contrary to science and contradicted by experience. As for transformism, there is nothing of which we have so little proof. But more than all, to suppose that the perfect proceeds of itself from the imperfect, the greater from the less, is in the highest degree irrational. No doubt we see matter, at first inert, become living in the plant, sensitive in the animal, intelligent in the human brain. Thus it passes through a series of ascending phases which may deceive a superficial observer, and lead him to believe that matter is itself the cause of its own progression. But reason tells us in the clearest manner that the greater



does not come of itself from the lesser. If matter ascends, it is because it is drawn upwards by some force more perfect than itself. The inferior nature is assimilated by the superior which it supposes pre-existent. The imperfect supposes the perfect, as the efficient cause.

It is therefore absurd to explain the world by what is imperfect, existing of itself and developing itself. The only rational explanation of the world consists in placing at the beginning the infinitely perfect producing all the ordered perfections which we behold. And thus is destroyed the fundamental error of evolution without God, the theory so elaborately worked out by Herbert Spencer.

### III. CREATION IS IMPOSSIBLE

After the materialists, we are faced by the pantheists, who deny the real distinction between the world and God, and tell us, either that all beings are only *modifications* of the sole divine substance, or that the world by a kind of generation has issued from the substance of God. Their argument is that creation out of nothing is impossible.

They say in effect:

1st. Out of nothing there can be nothing made. *Ex nihilo nihil.* Answer: This is to say that if at a certain moment nothing existed there would never have been anything. Without a cause, no effect. But that does not mean that an efficient, infinite cause cannot without pre-existing matter cause new beings to exist.

2d. If God had created out of nothing creatures distinct from Himself, as each of these creatures has its being and its perfection, their whole added to God would make more perfection. Now that is impossible, for to infinite perfection nothing can be added.

Answer: All the perfections of creation are already found in God in a more excellent manner, in such a way that the total of all created perfections added to the divine perfection does not form a greater. This will be better understood by an example. When a teacher has imparted his knowledge to his pupils, there are more educated persons than there were before the lesson, but there is not more knowledge. Or again, whilst a man with excellent sight is contemplating a landscape

he is joined by several short-sighted persons, there are more beholders, but there is not more to be seen, more view.

Thus after the Creation there are more beings, but not more Being. The Creation therefore is possible, and is the sole explanation of the world's existence.

#### IV. THE DISORDER, THE EVIL, THE SUFFERING, THE INJUSTICE EXISTING IN THE WORLD

We now come to the most serious argument against the existence of an infinitely good, wise, holy, just and merciful God: the existence in such a large proportion of evil in all its forms. There are great disorders in the material universe, excess of heat and of cold, tempests, cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions. There is a multitude of useless, even noxious beings; living things destroy one another; the innocent sheep is the wolf's prey; animals suffer and die. But all this is as nothing compared to the evils which afflict humanity. It is useless to trace the sad pictures. Man seems born but to suffer whilst waiting for the coming of the supreme catastrophe of Death to end sad existence.

If there are sufferings which are justly merited, there is also much which is undeserved. How many who are innocent succumb to barbarous violence! How much crying injustice! And then the inequality of social conditions. There are two alternatives: either God cannot prevent these things, and in that case He is not all-powerful, or He can, but does not will to do so, in which case He is cruel, ferocious, criminal.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, God does not exist.

We reply that God could have prevented all these evils. He could have created a world in which no other evil would exist than that necessarily inherent in every creature. God, therefore, is not powerless. But by a most wise design of His Providence, He wills or permits evil in order to draw from it a much greater good than that of which the evil is the cause of deprivation. He is therefore neither cruel nor criminal.

And, in the first place what we call disorder in the universe is often the ordered effect of the forces of nature. It is not more a disorder than the shadows are a blot on a pic-

<sup>1</sup> Faure, *Les crimes de Dieu*.



ture. These phenomena have their uses. The winds caused by cyclones renew and purify the air. The beings which we call useless have their uses which science will one day discover. The beings noxious to man have their place and play their part in the Creation. Man is not the center of the universe in such sort that every being is created simply for his pleasure and material benefit. A being which causes us suffering may yet be very useful. Often what is evil for one being is good for superior beings. We eat the flesh of the sheep: this is injurious for the animal, but good for us. It is established that animals suffer very little. We have seen a horse, one of whose hoofs had been carried off by a cannon-ball, continue to eat his oats as if nothing had happened. The illnesses of animals are of short duration, and death, of which they have no apprehension, releases them from suffering. In the life of animals the sum total of enjoyment far exceeds that of suffering, and if they could reflect they would thank Him Who had given them life.

Briefly, neither the apparent disorder of

Nature nor the sufferings of animals afford any serious argument against the wisdom or the goodness of God. At most, would these facts prove that the world is not perfect. Now, in this there is nothing surprising, for it is a limited creature. No doubt, God could have made a more perfect world. But if the actual world responds perfectly to the intention which God had in creating it, what have we to object?

We have a more specious argument in that drawn from the sufferings of humanity. How could a God infinitely good create a world in which suffering occupies so large a place? In the first place, we can answer that physical suffering is useful, and even necessary for the preservation of our organism. "Suffering" says Dr. Raichet, "is a very efficacious preventive defense. It is the sentinel of life. Without it we should expose ourselves to the most serious burns, wounds, injuries; we should not husband our forces, and it is probable that there would not be another generation of man."

Therefore, the Creator has done well in giving us an organism capable of feeling

pain. But, it is manifest that we suffer more than would be necessary to preserve life. Why? In the first place, most of our suffering is our own fault, is due to our excesses of all kinds. How many maladies are caused by our indulgence in pleasure! Much of our suffering is caused by others, by our contemporaries; is due to the generations which have preceded us. God has wisely ordained that the wants of inferiors should be provided by the care of superiors. If these are wanting in their duty, must we accuse God, Who has indeed willed to communicate to them the power and dignity of being His agents? Let us accuse no one but those who have failed in their task.

Moreover, if suffering is hard to bear, yet is it supremely useful. But we cannot establish this until we have proved that we have an immortal soul. We shall return later to this subject, and shall show the supreme rôle which suffering plays in the Christian life. Let it suffice here to indicate it briefly. Suffering makes reparation for the past, expiates our personal faults, or if we are innocent, helps to expiate the faults of

Society. It preserves us from committing fresh faults; it makes us perfect; gives us more strength and virtue; it makes us more compassionate for the misfortunes of others; it unites us more closely to God and makes us merit a great reward. These happy effects which we shall develop later have justified the writing of a book on The Good of Suffering.

There remains the *injustice*, the violence of which so many innocent people are the victims. How does God Who rules the world as its all-powerful Master allow this deluge of crime to spread over the earth? Because He wills to leave us free. Free-will is the condition of our merit, the most splendid title of glory of our nature. By means of it we become the molders of our destiny, and we can gain future happiness as a crown after victory. But we can use our free-will for evil as well as for good. We can violate the moral law, and in defiance of all right satisfy our passions, our cupidity, our sensuality, our ambition. Hence the crimes which disgrace humanity. For these man alone is responsible. Moreover, God re-



serves to Himself the right to punish crime as it deserves; already in this world but above all in the life to come, Justice shall be satisfied.

But, it will be said, why does the goodness of God cause or allow the innocent to suffer? A father who would see his children beating one another cruelly, and who would not do all in his power to separate them, surely would fail in his duty.

We answer: to the innocent who suffer God gives the strength to bear their sufferings, and He will reward them in an ineffable manner, so that they will bless those sufferings as the cause of their merit and their happiness. On the other hand we cannot altogether compare God to the father of a family. He leads men to good and turns them away from evil by means which are His own: the beauty of duty, the ugliness of vice, the promise of reward, the threat of punishment. But in order to prevent all moral disorder, He will not go so far as to deprive us of our free-will, to do this would be to suppress evil by preventing greater good. Without the wickedness of the execu-

tioners where would be the heroism of the martyrs? To prevent man from committing sin, must he be reduced to an animal acting only by instinct? God, no doubt, could have made life easier for us. He has not willed to do this. Why? We know not all the reasons, but might not one of these be the greatness of the reward which He destines for us if we are victorious in the trial? Infinite happiness cannot be bought too dearly.

We admit that to give a satisfactory reply to this argument of suffering and crime against goodness and justice, requires the acknowledgment of the existence and immortality of the soul, which we have not yet demonstrated. But that this immortality is possible, suffices for this objection to fall to the ground. Now, materialism may be able to raise doubts as to a future life, but never yet has it succeeded in establishing positively that this future life is impossible.

All these arguments against the existence of God are only difficulties in the reconciling of this existence with such and such facts. Even if we were unable to resolve them, it would not follow that we should reject such

a fundamental truth and one so solidly established as the existence of a first cause of the world. But cannot we give a satisfactory solution to these difficulties? We believe that we have done so.

If, however, some reader still retains a doubt as to the existence of God, we would say to him: Act as if God exists. If there is no God, you have nothing to lose. If God exists, you gain everything. We would further add: Maintain within your soul a desire for God, and you will never doubt of His existence.

## CHAPTER X

### IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

“**S**CIENCE has not ascertained a single fact regarding life after death.” Such is the emphatic negative which materialists oppose to our affirmative of the survival of the soul.

If by this they mean to say that no dead body has returned to life, their affirmative is too general. The Founder of Christianity, at least, is an exception. His work rests entirely on belief in His Resurrection, and His work is too grand, too much of a living present reality, to permit of a denial of the solidity of its foundation.

If they wish to say that no one has ever seen, heard, or discerned by any one of the senses, a soul separated from the body, in this there is nothing astonishing, for the soul, being immaterial, cannot be perceived by



any one of our senses, but, notwithstanding, witnesses, wholly worthy of belief, affirm that the souls of the dead have manifested themselves by the most irrefragable phenomena. We shall not adduce their evidence. To support our belief in the life beyond the grave, we have the testimony of the entire human race. Just as we do not find any people, however savage we may think them, who do not believe in the existence of God, so there are none who do not believe in a certain survival of the soul after the death of the body. These two truths are inseparably united. We find this universal belief manifested in the care of, and the honor everywhere paid to the remains of the dead. Man buries in some out-of-the-way corner the body of the dog, or of the horse, which has served him; to the remains of his fellow-being he accords religious respect. He lays them to rest in places set apart for this purpose which he calls cemeteries, that is to say, "dormitories," as if instinctively he was convinced that the incorruptible spirit survives, and one day will reanimate that which was its body. We faithfully

preserve the remembrance of that vanished spirit with which we maintain a mysterious communion, speaking to it, invoking it; we pray for its repose. Some nations offer sacrifice to the spirits of their dead.

If, occasionally, individuals are met with, who object to this devotion to the dead, these are but isolated instances. All peoples have sought to maintain relations with the dear departed; all nations have believed in survival after death, and in testimony of this belief have left to us either monuments or written documents.

Representations of the dead undergoing judgment are very numerous on the Egyptian sarcophagi; and also in the underground buildings which have been excavated. Nineveh and Babylon believed in a future life in which reward and punishment should be meted to the good or evil actions performed in this life.

The Persians consoled themselves with the belief that the souls of the just would go to the abode of Ormuzd, whilst the impious would fall into a dark abyss under the empire of Ahriman. The Hindoos still believe

that the souls of the dead return to the world in the bodies of men or animals. The Teutons and the Celts derived courage in battle from their hope of a better life for those who fell fighting. This is still the general belief in modern Japan. Hence, the contempt which they have for death.

We are very well acquainted with Greek and Roman mythology. Ovid and Virgil have described to us the state of the shades in the Elysian Fields or in the sunless Tartarus.

Philosophers, such as Plato and Cicero, express in lofty terms the popular belief, and give to it the support of their authority. What can be nobler or more consoling than these lines of Seneca written, perhaps, under the influence of St. Paul. "This mortal life is but a prelude to a better and more lasting one. Death is a passage, a birth in another world, and this event which we dread as being the end of our existence, is for us the dawn of an eternal day."

No doubt, amongst the various nations this general belief is accompanied by gross and sensual ideas, ridiculous inventions, but if we clear away from it the parasitical super-

stitutions with which the fertility of popular imagination has encumbered it, we find it is a powerful affirmation that man does not wholly die. After this life there is another which cannot be the same for the good and the wicked alike.

Now, when men by general consent make positive assertion regarding a certain fact, it is a proof of the truth of that fact, above all, when it is a question, as in the present case, of a fact in which the senses play no part, which seems even to contradict the evidence of the senses, for to all appearance man dies wholly, like an animal. Therefore, the human race speaks the truth on the question of our destiny, as it does on that of our beginning. As truly as there is a God, so is our soul immortal; these two truths are so obviously connected that to deny one is to deny the other. The Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness of God oblige Him to give our souls another life after the present one. His Justice requires that a different fate should be allotted to vice and to virtue, God Who is just must punish one and reward the other.

Now, it does not require much considera-



tion of the state of the world to recognize that that this justice is not sufficiently carried out here on earth. No doubt, even in this life peace of heart is already a reward for the practice of virtue, but how many innocent hearts are tortured by undeserved misfortunes. No doubt, suffering is sometimes born of iniquity, and crime often engenders remorse. But, how many criminals there are who prosper, with whom everything succeeds, and whose hardened consciences no longer feel remorse! Yes, too often the wicked triumph in this world, and the just meet with too much suffering and disappointment.

God would not reserve, in supreme mockery, for the unfortunate just man the same fate as for the wicked whom fortune has insolently favored, for Saint Vincent de Paul as for Nero; for the martyr who expires crying out "My God, I love Thee," as for the impious man whose last breath has been a blasphemy; our reason revolts against such a thought.

No: The Justice of God whose action is suspended in this life, owes to virtue and to vice a life beyond the grave in which each will

be treated according to its deserts, a life in which such strict justice will be done that all shall cry out "Thou art just, O, God! Thou art just."

The *wisdom* of God requires that He should never be inconsistent in His mode of action. Now, it would be inconsistent, if having given to our souls a certain nature, He were to act towards these souls as if they possessed a different nature. He has given us a mind which of itself naturally inclines to truth, beauty, goodness. We spend our lives in self-improvement, in acquiring knowledge, virtue, and yet our immense intellectual capacity is never satisfied. And is all this splendid development of human life to end in nothingness? In that case God would have less regard for our soul, the most beautiful of His works, than He has for the inert atoms of matter, not one of which is destroyed, but only passes into another combination when that in which it exists is destroyed. For it is an axiom of science that nothing is utterly destroyed.

Finally, God has created us for His own glory. Now, as we have seen, in this earthly

life we cannot sufficiently glorify God, it is too short, and too often our own negligence and our worldly occupations hinder us from fulfilling our duty of praise and thanksgiving. Hence, if utter annihilation were to be our end, nature would lack an interpreter to express its praise of God, and so He Himself would fail in attaining the end for which He created us. Would this be consistent with His Wisdom?

Finally, where would be His *goodness*? In the innermost depths of our being we feel an irresistible desire for life and happiness; in contradistinction to animals which, having only sensitive life, desire nothing beyond the impressions which they receive from their senses, we have the idea of existence and of endless duration, and we desire everlasting life and happiness. This desire cannot be gratified here on earth. Neither riches nor pleasure, nor glory, nor knowledge, nor even virtue, makes us happy. The more we pursue it, the further happiness flies from us, and at the very moment in which we seem to have attained it, it escapes from us. Suffering, physical or mental, presses upon us, strikes

us, seizes us and lays us low. We suffer from a number of accidents which come upon us suddenly or which are inevitable. And after having during our whole life aspired to a happiness to which we could not attain, nothing more remains to us,—O irony cutting as a lash!—but annihilation. Thus, God would have implanted in us these aspirations with no intention of ever satisfying them, He would have created us only that He might torture us. This is incompatible with His goodness. Yes; if God is infinitely just, wise and good, He is obliged to prove that He is so, by giving our souls after death another existence in which justice shall be done; in which we shall be able to render Him the intelligent adoration to which He has a right; in which we shall be able to gratify our desires by contemplating the eternal truth, ideal beauty, and by loving the supreme good without fear of ever losing them.

God, therefore, owes it to Himself to preserve the life of our souls after they have been separated from our bodies. But, for this, will He be obliged to work a miracle? No; because the very nature of the soul is



such that it must live for ever. The soul is immortal, not by grace, but by nature, because, as we have proved, it is immaterial, spiritual, that is to say, it does not derive its existence from the body, nor from its union with it. The simple force which causes us to live cannot be decomposed by any inferior cause. When the body becomes wanting to it, it still subsists notwithstanding, enjoying then its independent existence. But in what will this existence consist?

The soul, in order to act, to think, has need in this life of images, visual or auditive, which are furnished to it by the senses or the imagination, the brain acting as the instrument. After the destruction of the body the brain will no longer exist to furnish the soul with the matter for thought. How then will the soul be able to think?

We must admit that if the soul were still trammelled by the conditions of the present life, thought would be impossible to it after death. It would naturally fall into the sleep of unconsciousness, as happens in fainting attacks or syncope. Nor will death of itself have power to give to the soul a new mode of

thought. To effect this, will require the divine intervention: that may be frankly acknowledged. We maintain, however, that God without a miracle will be able to give the soul when separated from the body a new mode of thinking. In fact, the soul when separated from the body retains its intellectual faculties, not condemned to a state of absolute inertia, but capable of still acting, although under wholly different conditions. The intellect and the will being spiritual faculties are independent of the organs of the body, and subsist after its destruction.

The soul, also, will have objects for its love and its thought. First of all, in itself; it will be able to search into its own immaterial nature, its faculties, its states, its operations. This self-introspection will supply it with a treasury of ideas and of knowledge which it has collected in this earthly life, all its ideas about God, about man, the world. Ideas whether moral, religious, philosophical or scientific, are by no means necessarily dependent on words, or on sensible images.

No doubt, under existing conditions they must be expressed by words, but they are by

no means the slaves of words, for the soul can choose others; they dominate them; they are independent of them; they dwell in our mind even when we are not thinking of them; and reflection suffices to cause them to flow forth. Thus then, the soul will be able to occupy itself in elaborating these ideas, in exploiting them, and in combining them, guided by the great rational principles, the eternal truths which constitute the foundation of our spiritual being. Already, in this world, it is above all by the necessary immutable, universal truths that our soul is attracted. These are what have for it the greatest charm. The discovery of a mathematical truth caused Archimedes such transports that he forgot everything around him. What shall prevent the soul, set free from the body, from diving into these eternal principles, from drawing thence conclusions and thus acquiring fresh knowledge?

And at the same time the soul will be able to exercise the faculty of loving, for thought supplies this faculty with an object, and it can act every time that the mind acts.

Finally, if the soul can no longer receive

sensible impressions, what shall hinder it from having by means of which we are ignorant relations with other souls separated from their bodies? Why should there not exist between these souls an interchange of thoughts and affections? Be this as it may, it is certain that the soul can and must live after the body has fallen away from it; that it retains consciousness of itself; can contemplate its own nature, its faculties, its states, its operations; can enjoy the knowledge which it had previously acquired; can develop this knowledge; can grow in knowledge of the truth. Above all, the soul can grow in the knowledge and the love of God, can contemplate, as we have said, the eternal Truth, the Supreme Beauty, and can contract with it that closest union which is the beginning of boundless and everlasting bliss.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE FUTURE LIFE

#### METEMPSYCHOSIS

THE study of our inmost nature, and of the divine perfections have led us logically to this irrefutable affirmation which is also that of the human race: our souls are immortal. A future life awaits us in which we shall know, we shall love, we shall glorify God better than in this present one.

But what shall happen to those who in this present life persist in turning away from God, and in outraging Him by their rebellion? Their lot cannot be the same as that of the faithful servants of the Sovereign Master.

Human reason would fain of itself know and specify in what this lot will consist. Frightened at the thought of perpetual pun-

ishment beginning immediately after death and never ending, it imagined instead, for the guilty a system of successive purification, in other words, the transmigration of souls, Metempsychosis.

This doctrine, according to which the immortal soul can animate different bodies in succession, was accepted by many nations of antiquity, and has been taken up again by certain contemporary philosophers.

In India, this doctrine serves to explain the inequality of man's condition in life: such a person is poor and unfortunate because he has been a criminal in some previous existence. It constitutes the basis for the divisions of caste, and explains the religious respect in which certain animals are held.

Guilty souls must suffer the evils of many existences before they can be united again to the universal soul. This belief prevails, some details excepted, amongst the Brahmans as well as the Buddhists.

The Egyptians believed that immediately after death the soul passed into the body of an animal, and after having abode in the living organisms of the earth, air and water, it

returned at the end of three thousand years into a human body, to begin again indefinitely the same journeyings. Pythagoras propagated this doctrine in Greece and nearly all the Greek philosophers admit the transmigration of souls.

Plato taught a doctrine resembling it closely. According to him to learn is to remember, it is the recalling something which was known in a previous existence.

In the XIX century Fourier, and after him, Jean Baynand and Pierre Leroux, maintained that the soul passes successively through a countless number of stars. The spirit becomes superhuman and floats in the vast region of ether enveloped in a vaporous mantle of living matter. The guilty wander through spheres of suffering, or animate deformed bodies liable to suffer; after a certain time they pass by death into another quarter of the penitential labyrinth, and this goes on indefinitely. For if he who has fallen rises again, he who has risen can fall again.

Upon this doctrine of metempsychosis has been grafted *Spiritism*, according to which the human soul is formed of two parts, the one im-

material, the other, semi-material called perisprit, an intermedium between the spiritual soul and the material body. These two inseparable elements, the spirit and the perisprit must pass through numerous stages which include incarnation, growth, and disincarnation. When death comes, the spirit is disincarnated, but remains enveloped by its perisprit which holds it captive within the terrestrial zones, where for a certain time it manifests itself by acting upon material things, until such time as it becomes reincarnate. The manifestations always consist of knocking or writing performed through the agency of some medium, or even without a medium by the transportation or the projection of some object. The most important of these phenomena are: Animal magnetism, telepathy, thought-transmission, thought-reading, table turning.

What are we to think of all these systems?

First of all, the ancient doctrine of metempsychosis which made our earth the scene of the transmigrations, affords some ridiculous results. From the moment that our souls pass into the bodies of men or animals, we



are surrounded with the generations that have preceded us, and it is possible that I myself may have formerly animated the body of my great-grandfather. I should fear to kill a noxious or repulsive animal lest it might be the abode of a relative.

The ancients did not perceive all these disadvantages; in modern systems they are suppressed by making the astral world the scene of the metempsychosis. The stars are very far off and it is difficult to reach them in order to see what takes place in them.

The spiritists claim to sustain their theory by proved facts. But many of these facts are in reality obtained by the practice of fraud which has been punished in some instances by the law. With regard to the others, there is no proof that we are to attribute them to the souls of the dead. It is very probable, on the contrary, that they are produced by evil spirits, of a superior nature to ours who are interested in trying to deceive poor human beings.

Therefore we can say that modern metempsychosis, any more than the ancient form, does not rest on a solid foundation, and that

its fanciful inventions which perhaps appeal to the imagination are only on the whole improved hypotheses.

Let us see if these hypotheses are, at least, in conformity with reason and satisfy the legitimate requirements of our understanding.

Unfortunately for them, they do none of these things.

First of all, in order that the soul might be able to purify itself in a second life of the faults of the first, it should remember them, and at the same time have the consciousness of being the same person. That is obvious. In order that suffering should make reparation, we must accept it as the punishment for a fault which we know we have committed, and we must offer it to Supreme Justice in reparation for the insult which we have offered to Him. For the identification of the person who makes reparation in the present life with the transgressor of the past life, it is necessary that he should remember that former life. It is only because I remember my childhood, my youth, my maturer years, that I can assert my permanent individuality in all the different seasons of life, and that I

feel myself responsible for my actions during these various periods.

If God were to inflict suffering upon me for faults which I am unconscious of having committed, of which I have no recollection: this would be the cruel sport of a tyrant. The remembrance of a previous existence, therefore, is necessary to render reasonable and admissible the system of those who maintain the doctrine of metempsychosis.

Now, it is only too evident that none of us have any recollection of an existence previous to the present life. Shall we be told that our present life is the first of the countless states of existence through which we have to pass? This is not what these adherents of the system say, who claim to explain by the faults of a past existence the social inequalities of the present one. Moreover, what would be the end of these successive existences were they linked by personal consciousness and remembrance: the ameliorated condition of the criminal, his final purification? This is not at all certain; what man refused to God in a first trial, he may refuse Him in a second or third. It is even very probable that he would refuse.

It is, in fact, a natural established law that the repetition of acts forms habits, and that these habits in their turn tend strongly to the formation of others. The habit of drinking leads to drunkenness, and the drunkard has no longer the will-power to give up drink.

If we acquire the habit of sinning, humanly speaking, it is almost impossible for us to overcome this habit. Hence, a man of depraved habits entering upon a second existence, will be powerless to resist his sinful appetites, at least, his resistance to his passions will be much weaker than it was in his first life. Therefore, the odds are all against his amendment, rather will he, very much more likely, become worse, in which event the Sovereign Judge would be obliged to make him undergo a third trial with still more deplorable results. And thus, the soul would have to undergo an indefinite number of trials in which the punishment should be increased in proportion to the increase in guilt.

Is it not infinitely more rational to admit that this present life is the only time of trial offered to us by God, and that at death our



lot is finally decided? At least, in this case the sinner's culpability does not increase in such terrifying proportions. Each one receives the exact measure of punishment or reward which he has merited.

This solution is more in conformity with the qualities of human nature which to be complete requires the body. The soul is not the whole of man. It is the whole man who has sinned, it is the whole man who must repent and return to God. Death, therefore, must be the final stroke, after which the time of trial is finished, and man having reached his end, his lot is settled for all eternity.

Let us add in conclusion, that belief in an irrevocable sentence to be pronounced immediately after death, is much more likely to preserve us in the path of duty than the prospect of an indefinite series of trials in which we shall be afforded an opportunity of making reparation for our bad behavior here on earth.

"Why should I trouble to conquer my passions," man eager to enjoy himself, would argue, "since I can make up for everything, if not in this life, at least in another?"

Metempsychosis and all the systems springing from it are as contrary to the moral order as they are to reason.

We reject them, therefore, as chimeras, and dangerous delusions.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE NEED OF REVELATION

OUR reason by the exercise of its own power and guided by its own lights has been able to arrive at an affirmation of the future life. But in what precisely will this other life consist? On this point, the human mind left to itself has only succeeded, as we have seen, in falling into some strange errors. Hence, with regard to this question, it must declare itself powerless to arrive at a solution.

And even if we have been so positive in affirming the immortality of the soul, if our rational deductions have been so exact and so certain, it is, we confess, because we have allowed ourselves to be guided by a more brilliant light than that of reason, the light of the Gospel. The simple affirmation of the existence of a life beyond the tomb, although possible to reason, is not always easy.

Philosophers themselves, vowed by their profession to the quest for truth, have not all succeeded in discovering it, and many of those who did succeed in their search, have not always known how to preserve their just conclusions from the leaven of monstrous errors. Into what errors did not the most celebrated schools of philosophy fall with regard to a question, which seems to us so simple, enlightened as we are, perhaps without our understanding. Why, by the light of Christianity. How many errors even in Plato. The history of philosophy is almost nothing but the history of the vagaries of human reason. Cicero declared that there was no imaginable absurdity that was not upheld by some philosopher. The most enlightened minds of antiquity recognized their ignorance, and at the same time admitted that light could only come to them from Heaven, from divine teaching. Hence, their doctrines were full of contradictions. Cicero wrote in a serious treatise as follows: "O happy day in which I shall quit this life for that celestial company, that divine council of souls, in which I shall depart from this crowd, shall



emerge from this mire." But, presently he gave way to doubt and in a letter says: "When I die, I shall be deprived of all my faculties." To console himself on the death of Agricola, Tacitus could find nothing better than conjecture and guesses.

The philosophers failed utterly to arrive at profound convictions, such as would affect the practice of their lives. Their conduct was most often in contradiction to their doctrines. The wise Seneca's life was made up of compromises and platitudes. Married to an illustrious woman, he yet indulged in degrading amours; in like manner did ambition and avarice divide his heart.

Under these conditions of doctrinal difference and contradictory practices, what authority had the philosophers to instill into the masses the salutary truth which would have guided them in their moral conduct? They did not even make the attempt.

Modern philosophers have succeeded no better than their predecessors. Alfred Fouillie admits this. "All is a subject of controversy. No principle appears to be as yet soundly established, or, at least, in itself sufficient."

In consequence of these doubts and contradictions, philosophy has singularly lost prestige. At present it is the so-called "sciences," the results of observation, biology, chemistry, physiology, which claim that they alone resolve surely and certainly the great problem of life and man's destiny. We hear it constantly repeated that the future belongs to science.

The true *savants* are most modest and know how to keep within their own domain. Undoubtedly from a material point of view science in our day has furnished and will still furnish brilliant results, but it can neither do away with, nor yet explain the mystery of the life to come. It is powerless to resolve those questions which are of most importance to mankind: those of our origin and our destiny. Under its guidance man may succeed in the conquest of the visible world, but it teaches him nothing concerning the mystery of the invisible world beyond the grave.

If this is the case with regard to learned men and philosophers of cultivated mind, if these are powerless to discover with certainty the end of our life, how shall it be with the

masses of the people, laborers, artisans, men of business; that is to say, the immense majority of men who have neither the time nor the inclination nor the courage to devote themselves to the study of the human destiny?

It is a fact that the majority of men who have no religion have practically very little belief in the existence of God or the immortality of the soul. The mass of the people need to have these two truths placed before them in concrete form in a religious instruction. For the people there is no medium between religious belief and materialism. Spiritualism, purely philosophical and rational, only exists in individual cases.

It is certain that the human race, *en masse*, cannot by human powers arrive at the clear, certain, practical knowledge of the lot which awaits us after death. For this we require a safer guide, one of greater authority than reason. We need divine revelation. Plato recognized this, and made an appeal for divine teaching to guide us with certainty, as in a sound vessel, across the ocean of life.<sup>1</sup>

This teaching God could not fail to give us;

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Laws*, VII, III.

He could not neglect instructing us on this capital point. He left it to man to discover in succession through the ages scientific truths and the secrets of Nature. But He could not condemn all men to find by reason alone, and after endless groping, the solution of the great problem of our destiny, a solution which in order to act rationally must be known. He has been obliged to give us the solution in a form intelligible to all men, secure from doubt and error. Upon this point we can affirm with certainty that *we have divine revelation* regarding the lot which awaits us after this life. God owed it to His Wisdom, to His Goodness, to instruct mankind; to give us the solution of this problem on which depends our manner of life.

Against this conclusion, it is objected that if God had spoken, mankind would have listened; would have accepted unanimously this ready-made solution bearing upon it the indubitable seal of divine truth. Now, such is not the case, the greatest minds are still at variance on this essential question. Therefore God has not spoken; there has been no revelation.



To the objection thus put forward by Jouffroy, it is easy to reply that these differences only prove man's free will, which led astray by pride or the seductions of the senses, may refuse to accept the word of God. God has willed to respect our free will. He proposes to us a religion morally obligatory, but He does not impose it on us by constraint; He leaves us free, in order that our act of faith may be meritorious. It inevitably results that many men, abusing their freedom, refuse to believe.

And, first of all, God has not made His revelation to each individual in particular, but to chosen men whom He has commissioned to preach His Gospel in all ages and throughout the whole earth. Now, it happens that because of a whole sequence of faults or of negligence, many men have never heard of the Revelation, or at least only learn it after they have been brought up and educated in opinions and sentiments wholly contrary, from which it is very difficult for them to free themselves.

In the next place, Revelation is not a purely speculative theory. It has practical results;

it puts a bridle on man's passions, and commands him to gain the mastery over his senses; it prescribes certain ordinances regarding divine worship which are often troublesome and opposed to our dearest inclinations. To acknowledge Revelation in practice, we must conquer ourselves. Everyone has not the courage to do this, and so, in order to be dispensed from practicing, some refuse to believe.

Moreover, although the reasons for believing are in themselves obvious, yet, to arrive at this evidence requires reflection, investigation, effort, just as to see the sun we must take the trouble of opening our eyes. Now, man is at liberty to refuse to take this trouble; he can turn away his mind from the convincing reasons which would lead him to the conclusion: You must believe and practice this religion.

What prevents us seeing clearly into the things of God is the domination of the senses over the spirit. Our passions are as dense mists which rise from the depths of our conscience between the eye of the soul and the sun of truth. Tear down this curtain and

the light will appear. Revelation will show itself in all the splendor of its incomparable certitude. But here again, we must take the trouble to tear down this curtain, to dissipate prejudices, and many do not want to take this trouble. Here we have the reason why they do not see that the Revelation is divine. There are many other truths about which men differ, although they are obvious to natural reason, such as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul. It is all a question of free-will.

Because all men do not acknowledge Revelation, let us not, therefore, conclude that there is no such thing. Many people in matters of religion have a preconceived opinion, which they have beforehand decided not to give up; they will persist in turning their eyes away in order not to see the truth. But it is impossible for a man to study with open mind and in good faith the proofs of Revelation, without saying to himself in his heart: it is divine, it is of obligation.

The wisdom, the goodness of God require that we should know the end for which we were created; the destiny which awaits us

after death. Now, our reason is morally incapable of enlightening us sufficiently on this point. Therefore, God has been obliged to reveal it to us. Revelation exists: We can affirm this without fear.

Where is this Revelation to be found? in which religious system is it contained? This is what remains to us to discover. Obviously it will be found in that religion which gives us the best solution of the problem of the future life, the most noble and beautiful solution, the one which will best satisfy our reason, which will best respond to the aspirations of our hearts, which will be most conformable to our nature, and to the divine perfections.

These characteristics will enable us to recognize the religion which presents them to us, as being revealed, truly divine, and consequently of obligation; and that without prejudice, be it understood, to the other extrinsic proofs of credibility with which God of necessity has furnished it.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SEARCH FOR REVELATION

#### I. THE VARIOUS RELIGIONS

ACCORDING to a statistician of scrupulous accuracy, H. Krose, the population of the globe, numbering about 1537 millions, is divided from the religious point of view as follows:

	Millions
Fetish worshipers and idolators. . . . .	145
Shintoists. . . . .	17
Taoists. . . . .	32
Followers of Confucianism and ancestor-worship. . . . .	235
Brahmans and members of the ancient religion of India. . . . .	222
Buddhists. . . . .	120
Mahometans. . . . .	202
Jews. . . . .	11
Christians (of whom 265 millions are Catholics). . . . .	549
Not classified. . . . .	3

In all these religions, but in an unequal degree, are to be found *natural* principles, that is to say, principles resulting from the nature of God the Creator, and of man His creature, and, secondly, *revealed* principles, (real or claimed to be such), that is to say, principles resulting from God's direct initiative or intervention.

As these so-called Revelations contradict one another, one alone can be true. Which? Is it not possible for human reason to recognize it?

*A priori*. It would seem not, for Revelation surpasses reason. But in reality, Revelation contains truths within the grasp of reason, and those which are beyond it should not be in contradiction to it: that would be a sign of falsehood.

With good right, therefore, reason may examine the various religions which represent themselves as revealed, and discover which one amongst them contains the true Revelation. That one alone which is in conformity with our nature and with the divine nature, which regarding the problem of the future life affords us the best solution, the one

most in conformity with our nature and the aspirations of our heart: this one alone can be the true revealed religion.

Such are the characteristics by which we shall recognize the religion which possesses them as being truly divine and revealed, consequently of obligation, and this, be it understood, without prejudice to or exclusion of the other extrinsic proofs with which God of necessity must have furnished His Religion.

Let us then critically examine the different religions.

## II. FETISHISM AND IDOLATRY

Generally speaking, savage races have an idea more or less confused of a Supreme Being, the Father, Master, Creator of the world. But they do not offer worship to this Supreme Being, either because they regard Him in His inaccessible Infinity as so far removed from them, or else from the idea that being good He will not injure them, no matter what happens. They reserve their worship for inferior spirits, and for the *manes* of the dead. They believe that these spirits reside, or can be brought to reside, in images and in the

various objects called fetishes, the possession of which ensures the protection of the spirit residing therein. These are the fetishes, looked upon as endowed with life which they honor in order to propitiate them, and to protect themselves from their malign influence. Hence the offerings, the libations, sacrifices and superstitions practices of every kind.

Savage races believe in the survival of souls. But does their survival last for a long, indefinite period? Does it permit of reward and punishment? These are questions about which they trouble little. Eminently practical, they think only of securing protection for themselves, and of averting the malicious workings of the spirits of the dead.

Therefore they have no revelation as to the future life. On the other hand a religion which does not honor the true God cannot be the true religion.

### III. SHINTOISM

Although still the official religion of civilized Japan, Shintoism is only a childish polytheism. Since the reform of 1868, its



adherents have sought by the enthroning of the only immaterial God to give it the semblance of monotheism. But the people have refused to accept this reformed religion; their gods are the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the ocean, the thunder, the echo, the forces and phenomena of Nature which they imagine are endowed with life; they also worship certain animals, amongst them the fox.

From time immemorial the worship of their emperors, the sons of the gods, has formed part of the Shintoists' creed. By degrees the worship of the Mikado has become the fundamental dogma of Japanese tradition. Quite recently, a Japanese writer, Sekiguchi, says with regard to the obsequies of Mutsuhito:

"The Japanese will always regard it as a duty to worship their emperor both during his life here on earth and after he has ascended into Heaven." With the worship of the Mikado Shintoism also joins that of the great men of the Japanese nation, the heroes who have given their lives for their country. Temples are raised to them wherein it is believed that their souls dwell in the state of

*Kami*; that is, as divine spirits. The Shintoist includes in his homage the souls of his ancestors and of the dead in general.

It must be admitted that this religion is calculated to foster to the very highest degree the spirit of patriotism. In dying for his country, the Shintoist believes that he is securing for himself a high degree of glory, for the Mikado for whom he makes the sacrifice is not only a king; he is a god. But can mere patriotism replace the other virtues and supply for their absence? Moreover in this worship of nature and of spirits the true God is forgotten. Shintoism, therefore, cannot be the true religion.

The majority of the educated Japanese pride themselves on their observance of the precepts of Confucius, his indifference to religion, almost amounting to atheism, included.

#### IV. TAOISM

The founder of this system was Lao-tse, who lived about five hundred years B.C. The basis of his philosophy is *pantheism*.

A first principle, in the beginning concentrated and inactive, afterwards by emanation

and generation produces the heavens and the earth—which react one upon the other and in turn produce all other beings. In every being, man, animal, vegetable, and even mineral, is contained a soul participating in the universal principle, which soul with age becomes perfect and surpasses its first degree. Thus an old tree acquires a certain amount of reason; the soul of an animal which has grown old has almost the same powers as that of a man; the soul of an aged man penetrates time and space. It is the experience acquired, the stored-up knowledge which alone causes this progress. At death those souls which have learned nothing return unconscious into the great whole; those who have learned something, after having existed for some time clothed in etherealized matter, migrate into another body. Finally those who have learned the great secret that *all are one*, escape metempsychosis and re-enter into the *conscious* Principle.

As all things are one, it results that there is no distinction between good and evil; things contrary to one another are yet identical. Man has but one duty: to unite himself to the

Principle by spending as much time as possible in thought, in meditation, in profound investigation, in order that he may be convinced that all things are one. He must, moreover, preserve his life for the normal number of years, otherwise the abortive soul would descend in the scale of perfection. Hence results the worship of physical and spiritual hygiene, the suppression of the passions which wear man out before his time; all effort must be avoided; man must have no ambition.

As all events are inevitably decreed by the Principle, there must be no intervention of man; he must not meddle with anything; he must think only of himself, and let the world go round, convinced that all is well. The spoke of the wheel which is under now, will be uppermost presently. Therefore, let things go as they will.

As for the people, the best way to rule them is to keep them in ignorance; empty their heads and fill their stomachs.

The original Taoism with its philosophical speculations was beyond the grasp of the uneducated. A rapid change occurred in the polytheistic ideas, and heaven was peopled



with a multitude of spirits more or less divine.

Taoism as it exists at present is nothing but a medley of vulgar superstitions. The priests in their temples drive a trade in sorcery.

Contrary to reason because of its doctrines of pantheism and metempsychosis, irreconcilable with progress because of its fatalism and its principle of non-intervention, the system of Lao-tse has certainly no claim to be called the true revealed religion.

#### V. CONFUCIANISM

A contemporary of Lao-tse, Confucius was neither a philosopher nor founder of a religion; he was simply a politician. Not alone did he never philosophize on any subject but he condemned not merely all abstract speculation, but even all moral theorizing. With him everything is concrete; his whole aim is to form practical rulers and docile subjects.

From a religious point of view, his views were those of his Chinese ancestors. Like them he believed in the survival of the human soul, but with regard to the rewards or punishments of the future life he is absolutely

silent. He prescribed the worship of the *manes* of the dead. This worship was to be offered before a tablet bearing the name of the deceased, and which was to serve as a *medium* between him and his descendants. He insists, almost to the point of exaggeration, on filial piety, respect for parents and worship of their spirits.

Rulers should instruct the people but only as far as regards their duties, without theorizing or explanation. The great guiding principle of conduct is opportunism. "Every pre-arranged plan is evil; we must follow, not precede; walk without any determined intention, accommodate ourselves to every happening; act as seems best suited to the occasion."

These are the principles which have made Confucianism the religion of China, that is of the learned Chinese. No aim, no plan, no programme: such for 25 centuries has been the Chinese mentality. To change this mentality will take a long time. In the eyes of the Chinese Confucius has the great merit of having saved the ancient books from oblivion and of having edited them, the Rites, the

Annals, the Mutations, and of having co-ordinated the earliest records of Chinese history. On the other hand, his worship of antiquity, his aversion to the supernatural, his passion for decorum, his practical and worldly views, renders him in himself the very personification of the Chinese spirit. This explains the extraordinary influence over his country which he exercised. Later in deifying Confucius, his disciples deified themselves.

But true Confucianism is not a religious system; it is only practical morality, a rule of life. Hence it is that we find his disciples making up for its deficiencies by burning joss-sticks in the Taoist Temples and prostrating themselves before the images of Buddha.

Briefly, it was not to Confucius that the true Revelation regarding God and the future life has been made, nor has he moreover ever claimed to have received it.

## VI. BRAHMANISM

Under the name of Brahman are usually classified the votaries, numbering 222 millions, of the religions of India.

It is not easy, in a few lines to give the characteristics of these religions whose history embraces more than 30 centuries. Brahmanism has no religious center, and no fixed doctrine. It consists of an inextricable jumble of wild superstitions, gods, demi-gods, and deified spirits with the countless temples erected to these, and the discord of the various forms of worship.

By proceeding, however, on broad lines, it is possible to distinguish three epochs in the religions of Hindostan.

1. The period of the *Vedas* with its solemn family worship, moral and decorous. The *Vedas* glorify in turn *Indra*, the master of Heaven and earth, *Varuna*, who has formed all things, *Surya*, who preserves every being, and *Agni*, the god of fire who knows all things.

The souls of the dead dwell in the tombs or in some little known regions. Those who have led good lives are happy in company with Yama, the first man. The fate of sinners is not inquired into. On the sacrifices offered by their male descendants born in lawful wedlock depends the happiness of the dead. Marriage is thus rendered obligatory in order



to ensure the happiness of one's ancestors and one's own also; funeral ceremonies and sacrifices also in the same way become of obligation.

To the second period belongs Brahmanism properly so called, which probably about 800 years B.C., replaced *Vedism*. At this period were promulgated the laws of Manu which explain the origin of beings as resulting from an emanation of Brahma, and which also set forth the duties of man. Human beings have sprung from the various parts of Brahma's body, the Brahman from his mouth; from his arm Kohattriya, or warrior; the Vaisya, or merchant, from his thigh; the Sudra from his foot. It is this belief which has given rise to the rigid and cruel distinctions of the various castes, the division between which is as utter as if they were separated by iron walls; it is this belief also which gives to the Brahmans masters by right of creation, their superiority and their prerogative. As for the Sudra, he is by nature a slave and must perforce remain so.

Just as the origin of things is explained by emanation, so reabsorption into the great

whole is their end. The human soul, which is an infinitesimal part of the universal soul, becomes stained by its union with matter and to regain its original purity it must pass through an indefinite series of existences in human form or that of an animal or even of a vegetable until it becomes sufficiently pure to enter into the bosom of the universal soul. Brahmans alone are holy enough to hope for this absorption; the members of other castes will, as their reward, be reincarnated as Brahmans. But, it is also possible to lose caste by sin, and to be reincarnated in a lower class, to become, for example, a rat, a frog, or a crocodile.

2. The religion of the Hindus is a kind of degenerate Brahmanism formed by the addition of gross superstitions. It is a mixture of pantheism, polygamy, idolatry and fetishism. In fact, the religion of Brahma, lacking worship and altars, did not suffice for the people who pay homage to divinities more easily conceived by their imagination, Vishnu, Siva. Vishnu, the principle which animates and gladdens Nature, has descended several times amongst men and his Avatars are

related in long poems; Siva, the genius of destruction, has a thousand titles and is worshiped by a thousand different rites, some of them immoral. One of Siva's wives, the goddess Kali, wears as necklace a chain formed of skulls whilst two corpses form her earrings.

Together with these principal divinities we find a multitude of others who are honored by rites often obscene.

The influence of this religion upon the morality of the people is pernicious in the extreme. Everything in it tends to excite the most shameful passions. Disgraceful scenes are enacted in the temples and often even in the streets.

This chaotic mass which is the Hindu religion is surrounded and upheld by the law of caste, the respect for life even in an insect, or a blade of grass, the respect paid from time immemorial to the cow, a respect bordering on idolatry. It is dominated by the life of the Brahmans, possibly worthy and respectable but weighted with superstition and vain observances. A religion which is based essentially on pantheism and metempsychosis

cannot be accepted by reason. How then is it that this religion is accepted and practiced by more than 200 millions of human beings? The gross ignorance of multitudes and the deeply rooted pride of a caste which believes it is divine alone can explain it.

## VII. BUDDHISM

Buddhism had its birth about the fifth century B.C., in Central India. The founder, Siddhartha Gautama, also called Cakya-Muni, being deeply affected by the miseries of life, conceived a desire of providing some means of escape from them. Caring very little about the solution of such questions as the origin of man and the world, the existence of God and His nature, he devoted himself wholly to formulating practical precepts. His aim was to procure for himself and for others deliverance from the miseries of life, above all, to escape reincarnation in another form, for all existence is necessarily miserable.

In none of his writings does Buddha (the Enlightened One), as he was afterwards called, affirm anything nor does he ever deny the existence of a Supreme Being. On this



capital question he refuses to make any pronouncement, leaving his disciples at liberty to form their own opinion, to choose their god or gods according to their inclination. For him the existence of God is a secondary affair, of no importance to his end, which is solely to deliver men from suffering by delivering them from life. All that he held as certain, indisputable, is retribution in another life for our actions. By an inevitable law inherent in things, our faults are attended by suffering and our good actions by happiness. Men live to expiate their faults. Those who lead good lives are reincarnated in a new life under better conditions, and pass through successive transmigrations until they reach the final stage, *Nirvana*.

What is Nirvana? It is the absorption of the creature in the Great Being, in the unconscious and immovable mass; it is a state of passive repose, destitute of thought or feeling; if not utter annihilation, it is, at least its equivalent.

Therefore the fundamental principle of Buddhism is the gloomiest pessimism; life is a misfortune and true happiness consists in

deliverance from it. Virtue can obtain this deliverance for us; we can escape the law which imposes reincarnation on everyone at their death. Those who are perfectly purified will not be subject to this law of reincarnation.

On this strange dogma Buddhism has based a sufficiently pure code of morality, containing all that must be done in order to attain final deliverance. It includes five indispensable precepts, three counsels for everyone, and two for religious.

The five precepts of obligation for all who would be numbered amongst the disciples of Buddha are as follows:

1. Do not destroy life, even in the meanest thing.
2. Do not steal.
3. Never tell lies.
4. Avoid every act contrary to chastity.
5. Abstain from intoxicating drinks.

#### *General Counsels*

1. Never eat after the midday meal.
2. Never give yourself up to worldly amusements.

3. Do not wear any ornament savoring of vanity.

Finally, religious ascetics, must

1. Sleep on a low, hard couch.

2. Make a vow of poverty and of mendicancy.

(Taken from the Buddhist Catechism, by Subhadra Bikihu).

Such is the way to Nirvana. The laity can never reach it because of their attachment to life. Religious alone have any right to this state.

What are we to think of this system? Undoubtedly, its precepts of morality contain much that is excellent, but in them are grave omissions. There is no mention of duties to parents and superiors, nor of love of one's neighbor. Charitable institutions find no place in the Buddhist code. The respect for life, even in the case of noxious animals, is carried to a ridiculous excess.

However, this moral code has remained a dead letter, and the followers of Buddha continue subject to the same vices as the people of the pagan countries. This is not surprising when we recollect that Buddha's morality

has no basis; it supposes neither legislator nor judge, it presents no efficient sanctions; annihilation is not a reward, nor is existence a punishment sufficient to deter a criminal. Buddhism is a system of morality without God; it is pessimism, the supreme aim of which is annihilation; it is the religion of despair and nothingness.

All that we have said applies to Buddhism in theory, as it is found in books. Practical and popular Buddhism is quite a different thing. In it rites and idolatrous observances are multiplied; it has become polytheism, adoring a multitude of gods, first and foremost of them all Buddha himself and his monstrous image. The instincts of human nature have been stronger than theory. The idea of God and a future life have once more spread in a superstitious form, in a religion whose real doctrine is atheistical.

With regard to the rapid spread of Buddhism, it may be explained by the fact that it was a protest against the tyranny of the ancient sectarian Brahmanism; that it proclaimed the fraternity of man and the abolition of castes; that it appealed, from a religious



point of view, to women as well as to men, to the poor as well as the rich, to the sinner and the just man alike; finally, that its code of morality is, on the whole, an easy one, and that it tolerates all superstitions.

But it is quite evident that a system which ignores God is not the true religion.

We have passed over, as not containing the true Revelation, all those religions which have perverted the very idea of God by breaking up its unity; those which render to the true God no worship whatsoever; those which rest essentially on metempsychosis or the transmigration of souls.

About half of the human race, alas! must be counted as belonging to these religions; but this half is the least civilized, the least instructed, some of the peoples belonging to it being wholly savage.

It now remains for us to examine the three great monotheistic religions: Mahometanism, Judaism and Christianity which number 762 millions of followers belonging to the most civilized nations of the world.

One of these three religions must surely be the true one.

## CHAPTER XIV

### RELIGIOUS SOLUTIONS

#### I. MAHOMETANISM

**P**ROLONGED study is not necessary to convince us that Mahometanism is certainly not a religion revealed by God. Its founder was an imposter who gave way unrestrainedly to all his passions, to ambition, cruelty, and notorious debauchery. He succeeded only in establishing his religion by the force of arms, and by the bait which he held forth of the most licentious pleasures. In his doctrine there is nothing original. Anything of good which he teaches has been taught before him. The Koran is an incoherent medley of prayers, prescriptions pertaining to ritual and hygiene, anecdotes, ludicrous stories, and savage anathemas. Anything rational which it contains has been borrowed from Judaism or Christianity, and with this, how many falsehoods which betray ignorance, how many contradictions? He

often speaks of the unity of God, but this God, according to him, is an arbitrary, vindictive, bloodthirsty tyrant whose gloomy traits are rarely relieved.

From the moral point of view, Islamism, it is true, prescribes alms giving, prayer and fasting, but it often substitutes violence and cruelty for justice and charity. Chastity gives way to lust which enervates and brutalizes man, dishonors woman, and degrades her to the level of a miserable slave. For liberty and the initiative spirit, it substitutes fatalism, inertion, and stolid resignation. Hence, history shows us that when rigorously enforced, Islamism is destructive to all civilization. We have no need, therefore, to examine into the revelations which Mahomet claims to have had regarding the future life; we are certain, beforehand, that they are not the word of God.

Let us, however, briefly state them, in order to prove how, most often, they are contrary to reason. The traditional teaching of Islamism regarding what awaits us after death is as follows:

When a corpse is placed in the tomb, two

angels come and order the dead to sit up; they then question him on the unity of God and the mission of Mahomet. If he answers well, he is left in peace, if not, he is beaten with large pieces of iron until the pain causes him to scream so loudly that everyone hears him, *except men*. The souls of the prophets are admitted immediately into Paradise, those of the martyrs enter into the crop of green birds which eat of the fruits and drink of the waters of Paradise. The souls of the other true believers are free to wander about graves, or are shut up within the trumpet which will be sounded at the last judgment. The souls of the damned are offered in turn to heaven and to earth, and being rejected by both on account of their disgusting smell, are then shut up in a gloomy prison to suffer torture until the Resurrection. For Mahomet teaches the doctrine of the Resurrection for all, good and bad alike. He even holds that animals will rise again, and then poor weak, helpless beasts, such as the lamb, will be revenged on their powerful and cruel tormentors.

After the resurrection and the judgment, the bad will go to Hell, the good to Heaven. It



is only non-believers who will remain for ever in Hell. The faithful Mussulmans, no matter how wicked they may have been, will one day be delivered from it, but not until after a period not less than nine hundred years, and not exceeding seven thousand; finally they will be admitted into Paradise.

Mahomet's Paradise is famous. We shall not describe it. Let it suffice to say that in it all the senses are to be gratified to satiety. Every good Mussulman will receive seventy-two *houris*, divinely beautiful women, taken by God not from the dust of this earth, but from pure musk. If children are desired, they will be conceived, born, and will reach adult age within the space of an hour.

Have women according to the Koran, an immortal soul? Not all, perhaps. In any case, they will not be admitted into the Paradise of the men with the exception of certain remarkable women, and those whom the believers wish to retain as wives.

We must not think that these descriptions are intended to be understood in an allegorical or spiritual sense, as is the case with many passages in the Bible, particularly, in the

Apocalypse. No; the Mussulman must believe in the strictest literal sense all these fables in which the most glowing Oriental imagination has been given full rein.

Thus all the pleasures which await the follower of Mahomet in Paradise are sensual, material pleasures. To be strictly truthful, however, let us add that from time to time, he will be permitted to see God, even every morning and every evening if he so desire.

It is obvious that these sensual dreams which only transport into another life in a greatly exaggerated degree the gross pleasures of this present life, cannot satisfy the legitimate needs of our intellectual nature which longs to behold the eternal truth, to contemplate ideal perfection, and to be united by a love which can never cease to the Supreme Good, the source of all good and happiness.

We can understand that the Mussulman's Paradise may have excited the warlike courage and ardor of a people but little developed, and who can only conceive brutish pleasure; it can only provoke the contempt of noble, cultivated minds.

Certainly, it is not from Islamism that we

shall ask the solution of the problem of the future life.

## II. JUDAISM

Mahometanism eliminated, there remain but two religious systems for us to consider: Judaism and Christianity. Here it must be observed that Christianity is but the development of the ancient Jewish religion whose dogmas it has adapted; whose beliefs it has made its own, omitting only the order of ritual. The two religions form but one, of which they are the successive stages. Hence, it results that having rejected all others, there now remains in reality for our consideration but one religion. And as there must be a revealed religion, of necessity it follows that the only one left to us is this revealed religion for which we seek.

With respect, therefore, shall we examine it, knowing that we shall certainly find therein the divine solution of the problem of our destiny.

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Although the Hebrews believed in a future life they had very little enlightenment regard-

ing the conditions of the life beyond the tomb. They believed that after death every soul descended into "Sheol," a dreadful place, deep, gloomy, which was the abode of good and bad without distinction. But though all, irrespective of merit, had one common abode, this did not imply that the condition of all and the treatment meted to them were identical. However, from the beginning the difference between the condition of the just and of the impious is enveloped in obscurity.

In the Pentateuch especially, we find mention of the lot common to all the dead in "Sheol." It was with fear that souls descended into it; death is a punishment for sin.

But to those who had served God faithfully, it was not so terrible; they ended their days in peace; they hoped for the salvation to come. Hence was it that people desired to die the death of the Just.

This conception of "Sheol" is found again in the Book of Proverbs and in the Psalms. It is a place of darkness into which the light never penetrates; once a soul had entered therein, it was impossible to leave it, to return to life. Those who dwell therein are



called *refaïm*, the weak. They are not deprived of feeling, but they are weak and have no voice; they are like those that sleep. They know nothing of what happens on earth. They no longer praise their God. It is the land of oblivion. Thus, these Sacred Writings also do not show the difference between the souls of the Just and those of sinners, but by degrees we find the hope of a Redeemer becoming more and more accentuated in them.

The prophets dwell more on the punishments which shall be inflicted on the wicked in "Sheol." No longer is it merely a gloomy prison, but a devouring fire in which sinners shall dwell amidst everlasting flames.

The Sacred Writings subsequent to the Captivity begin to speak of the rewards which the souls of the Just shall receive already even in "Sheol." At his death, God will treat the just man well. Sudden death is for the just man a favor from God who loved him, and would take him away from the midst of sinners. In a dream Judas Machabeus saw Jeremias surrounded with glory together with the High Priest, Onias, praying for the people. He caused sacrifice to be offered for

his soldiers who had been killed in battle that they might be delivered from their sins.

Thus, by degrees, the Bible divides the souls of the departed into three classes, all in "Sheol," the Just, happy and able to assist the living by their prayers; those guilty of small faults who may be relieved by the intercession of those on earth; and, last, criminals who have deserved the punishment of fire.

To these beliefs let us add the dogma of the resurrection of the body. The development of this dogma in Israel was slow. If the ancient Hebrews took such care and trouble about the burial of the dead, it was because they believed, like the Egyptians, that whilst the body remained unburied the soul could not be at peace in the life beyond the tomb. The idea of the resurrection appears in the Book of Job, in Osee, still more clearly in Isaias, in the symbolical vision of Ezechiel, and especially in Daniel where the doctrine of the resurrection is formulated in exact terms; "those that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some unto life everlasting and others unto reproach. . . ."

In the second Book of the Machabees, we

find magnificent professions of faith in the resurrection, the author seeming to regard the resurrection of the body as resulting necessarily from the immortality of the soul.

In fine, the belief of the Hebrews regarding the life after death resembled much those of the other nations of antiquity, and must have originated like them in a common source going back to the beginnings of the human race. But whilst the majority of the nations had embellished this traditional groundwork with fables and legends, the Jews knew how to preserve it pure from all mythological mixture.

Judaism had as its mission the preparation for the Coming of the Messias; its religious worship, its ceremonies, its ordinances, its prophetic writings: all directed the nation's hopes to a holy King Who should come to establish an immortal kingdom of peace and justice.

Outside the Bible the Messianic idea is found in those writings either Jewish or inspired by Jewish influence which precede the epoch of Jesus Christ. This is incontestable.

If therefore the Messias has come, Judaism

has no longer any object, and can no longer be the true religion which God has willed and revealed.

Now it is easy to see that in Jesus Christ are fulfilled those prophecies which five hundred years before His coming announced the qualities and the characteristics of the Messiah. He came into the world, let it be particularly noted, at the time foretold by the Prophet Daniel, therefore, the Messiah has come. The Jews who will not acknowledge this, are no longer the people of God. The intelligent, powerful, and active portion of their race confine themselves to the material hopes of this world, and seek to conquer the world by financial supremacy. They no longer possess the true solution of the problem of our eternal destiny, and are not even anxious to possess it.

Judaism, as a religion, died in giving birth to Christianity.

Let us consider, therefore, how Christian Revelation has come to preserve and to complete Jewish belief regarding the Hereafter.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

**T**HE whole of the Christian dogma concerning the future life is contained in four points: Purgatory, Heaven, the resurrection of the body, the eternal duration of Hell.

#### I. PURGATORY

According to the Christian doctrine there is after death a time of expiatory suffering for the souls who have departed this life in the friendship of God, but who are not sufficiently pure to enter Heaven at once, either because of their attachment to their venial faults, or because they have not sufficiently expiated the sins for which they have been forgiven.

In reality, after we have been reconciled with God, there usually remains a punishment to be inflicted for our indulgence in

unlawful pleasures. The Church has had no revelation regarding the duration of this time of expiation. But, as Masses are offered for those long dead, it is permitted to us to believe that it may last for long years.

It is certain that the pains of Purgatory are very great, far beyond the sufferings of this life, because, in Purgatory, God's Justice is exercised in all its rigor on sin.

In this world, our voluntary acceptance of suffering has great merit; our unreserved resignation to the Will of God Who is chastising us increases the power of our expiation, so that, relatively speaking, we can easily and quickly expiate our sins in this world.

But in Purgatory, the soul having clearly perceived that God is the Supreme, Universal Good, is no longer free with regard to Him; her resigned acceptance of suffering is of obligation, and consequently has but little value. The soul can no longer offer to God the precious homage of her free will; she can no longer, to speak the truth, offer satisfaction, she can only suffer sufficiently, *non satisfacere sed satispati*, until the required measure has been filled up.

The greatest pain of Purgatory is the being deprived of the vision of God, Whose infinite Beauty and Goodness the soul comprehends. Deprived of its body and of all sensible imagination, of all natural means of communication with the external world, the soul has no longer any thought or desire but of God; it longs with inconceivable ardor to be united to Him, but is held back, forced to remain in exile until the very moment ordained for its entrance into Heaven. For life's journey is ended; the time of trial is over; and this exile is the more terrible that the poor soul realizes to the full that she is herself the cause of it, by those sins which gave her but a trifling satisfaction; those faults which by a little vigilance she might have avoided, or at least might have expiated in this life when it was easy to do so.

Purgatory must not be confounded with the state of trial of metempsychosis in which the soul might labor for its amendment, its perfection, for increase of merit, and all the time run the risk of going wrong, of becoming worse.

No; according to the Christian dogma, the

time of probation ends at death. At the hour of death, the soul of the just by an act of Sovereign love chooses God, and can never more renounce Him. If obliged to wait for the enjoyment of the Supreme Good, it can no longer count on an increase of merits and of privileges, nor has it to fear the loss of these; it can no longer do anything but suffer to purify itself, and purify itself by suffering. Its eternal lot is fixed; the place which it will occupy in Heaven is irrevocably decided.

## II. HEAVEN

When we were examining closely into our soul in order to prove its immortality, we observed within ourselves an unconquerable longing for happiness, and we were obliged to confess that none of this world's goods could satisfy us wholly. Therefore, it would be unworthy of our noble nature to imagine a heaven as consisting only of the trivial pleasures of this life, even in their highest degree, as did the pagan poets in their description of the Elysian Fields, and Mahomet in his sensual paradise. All these enjoyments would be incapable of satisfying the insatiable



and ever-recurring desire for truth and love which our hearts experience. To satisfy this desire, the Infinite is necessary; nothing less than God Himself, our first beginning and our last End, will suffice. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord!" says St. Augustine, "and our hearts cannot find rest until they have found Thee."

But there may be several ways in which we can find rest in God; that suited to our nature in itself is the vision and the contemplation of the divine perfections in the Works of God, in His creatures in whom He is reflected as in a mirror. We might, therefore, imagine a state in which our souls by their own faculties would see more clearly the radiance of the divine beauty, and then, after the resurrection of our bodies, a state in which, delivered from all infirmity, assured of immortality, we would allow ourselves to be lulled eternally in the sweet contemplation of the creatures through whom we learn to know our Creator better, and to love Him more and more.

All this is but mere childish imagining, compared to what, according to Catholic

dogma, God, in reality, has promised us. By an incomprehensible favor, exceeding all the requirements of our nature, God promises that He will give us Himself. "I, Myself, shall be your reward greater than all the happiness which you could desire"—No more arguments, no more deductions, God will cause us *to see* His own nature. And this will be for us joy and glory beyond all measure, exceeding that which any nature, not alone already created, but which might be created, could of itself attain. We shall see God as He is, face to face.

When, its purification being finished, the soul of the just man shall enter into the abode of bliss, it will be taken possession of and transformed by the light of glory, which will penetrate it, and give it a sublime resemblance to God. God will become, as it were, the essence of our understanding in order to make Himself seen, no longer in that faint dim manner in which our understanding, when it applies itself to know God by means of His creatures, after much labor succeeds in conceiving Him, but such as He is in the indivisible unity of His nature, the incom-

prehensible Trinity of His Persons, the Father, Infinite Power, causing His nature to pass without any loss to Himself into the eternally begotten Son, the splendor of His glory and the perfect image of His Person; the Holy Ghost, Who is the living, subsisting, personal love of the Father and the Son, the perfection of the divine life whose copiousness He consumes without ever drying up its sources. And in their sublime vision we shall behold the harmonious union of the divine perfections. We shall behold age in accord with youth; immensity with simplicity; immutability with the most fruitful activity; strength allied to goodness; justice to mercy.

We shall behold the very essence of God, and in this divine essence, that of all actual and possible creatures of which it is the cause and the model.

We shall understand the inmost nature of atoms and of worlds; physical and chemical forces; the secrets of animal and vegetable life; the mysterious method by which spirit and matter are united within us; and how these two substances, so opposed to each other, can yet act upon each other.

God will discover to us the secrets of His Sovereignty; the wisdom of His designs; the reasons for all events and the links by which they were joined. At this sight our understanding will be filled with ineffable content which from the heights of our soul will descend into all our faculties; our will, our heart, our faculty of loving, at this vision of God will be inflamed with unspeakable ardor.

"I have found the Supreme Good and I will not be separated from Him." And God, far from withdrawing, will give Himself to our enraptured soul, He will unite Himself to it in a union the closest and most intimate, filling it with the liveliest, the deepest joy.

And this joy shall last for ever. Never shall there be fear of losing it; never the agonizing thought of being separated from God; never any dread of our happiness growing less. Like unto God our happiness will have no end, and at the same time it will be for ever new. The soul, incapable of exhausting the vision of Infinite Beauty, will pass without ever growing weary from one ecstasy to another.

Never shall there be an end to the wonders



unfolded for our contemplation, for the divine Omnipotence has no limit, and, therefore, are the wonders possible to Him also unlimited.

To this joy which the vision of God shall cause us, will be added that of beholding the immense and radiant assemblage of the Saints. The elect of God are not separated in the glory of Heaven, and in an especial manner those who on earth were united by the ties of a pure affection are placed near one another. Let those hearts then that mourn dear ones separated from them by relentless death, take comfort. In heaven we shall meet again; we shall know our own; those whom we loved so dearly, and who have gone before us, are waiting for us on high, waiting until we go to them, never again to be separated from them.

Enlightened by the same light of glory, we shall see one another; we shall have the most intimate knowledge of one another; shall understand one another; and recognizing, each one, the merits of the other, we shall consequently render to one another the admiration, praise, and love which is due to each

one, that thus we may be united finally in one common act of thanksgiving to the God Who has saved us. The sweet intimacy of the elect will complete the happiness of the intuitive vision, happiness such as the eye has never seen, nor the ear heard. For it is a happiness infinitely beyond our nature and our aspirations, which God, notwithstanding, has prepared for those who are willing to merit it in this life.

### III. THE RESURRECTION

Immediately after death, or at least immediately on the completion of their purification, the souls of the just will enter into enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. Such is the teaching of the Church, in contradiction to certain heretics who maintained that souls would sleep in unconsciousness until the end of the world, and also, against the views of certain theologians of the Middle Ages who believed that the intuitive Vision of God would not be granted until after the Last Judgment.

However, it seems reasonable to think that something will be wanting to man's perfect

happiness as long as his body has no share in it. Our body is an essential part of our nature. The Wisdom of God cannot leave human beings eternally maimed, nor would it be consistent with His Justice to do so. For the body having been associated with the soul in its good works should share in its reward. God, therefore, must reunite to the soul those inert remains which once formed its body, and to do this, He must restore life to them; the body must rise again. This reasoning is so simple, that it is difficult to believe in the immortality of the soul without at the same time believing in the resurrection of the body. In the time of our Lord, amongst the Jews these two beliefs formed but one, and to prove to the Sadducees the resurrection of the body, our Lord was satisfied with proving to them that the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still living with God.

Catholic teaching confirms this induction of reason, by assuring us in the decree of the 4th Lateran Council that all men shall rise again with the self-same bodies which they had in this life.

This definition involves a difficulty. What is the principle of identity by means of which our bodies shall be the same as they are now after the Resurrection? Shall it be said that it is the soul alone which plays this part, as it does in this present life, by preserving the identity of the individual from the cradle to the grave, notwithstanding the successive passing away of all the cells of his body? In that case, divine Omnipotence would have but to make another body for us, the matter from which it was formed being of the utmost indifference.

But then, this would be the creation of a new body, not the resurrection of the *same* body.

We must, therefore, admit that in addition to the soul, there is something in the body which constitutes the principle of identity; the relation of the corporal molecules to one another, the order of the cells, the equipoise of the moods; all that makes the temperament, physical and even moral tendencies.

Finally, in conformity with the general opinion of theologians, let us admit that God will take a certain number of molecules which



belonged to our body, as for instance, the first cells of which we were formed whilst yet in the embryo state that to these He will add others in such a way as to reconstruct a fully matured human body; that would suffice for us to be able to say that we had got the same body.

This conception of the resurrection of the body would obviate any difficulty arising from the fact that certain molecules of matter had belonged in succession to several human bodies. Only in one body would these molecules be restored to life: the bodies in which they had their primordial existence.

The remains of our bodies will be restored to life, but a life very different to our present one on this earth.

Those risen bodies will be endowed with marvelous qualities. They will be radiant, agile, swift, able to pass from star to star with the rapidity of thought, through the heavens which have been made new to receive them.

St. Paul tells us that our bodies shall be glorious, incorruptible, full of vigor and endowed with incomparable beauty; spiritualized to a certain degree they will no

longer need nutrition to maintain life. They will retain all their senses, and these, perfected by a new sharpness, will become the source of the purest and most delightful knowledge and enjoyment.

Finally, the bodies of the elect will be impassible, delivered for ever from sorrow and suffering.

And thus all that we lose in death shall be restored to us a hundred fold, and that cruel enemy of the human race, death, which mows down all; which triumphs over all; in turn shall be vanquished and destroyed for ever.

But, is it necessary to say it, this glorious triumph is reserved exclusively to the elect.

For those who in this life have not done what is necessary to merit Heaven, there awaits a dreadful resurrection.

Let us consider now the teaching of Christianity regarding the souls of the damned.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION (*Continued*)

#### HELL

**T**HAT there is after death a punishment for those who to the last moment of life have persisted in evil-doing, of this no one who admits the existence of God can have any doubt. God is necessarily just and His justice demands the punishment of sin. Now, in this world sin is not always punished, at least sufficiently. The majority of criminals escape human justice, and divine justice would seem often to slumber and to tolerate the crime. "I have sinned," says the guilty one, "and nothing dreadful has ever happened to me." Of course there is such a thing as remorse, but that can be stifled. We have all known of great wrongdoers who succeeded in silencing the voice of conscience, and who after a long course of evil-doing have been taken out of the world so quickly that they have scarcely had time to

suffer. Therefore, there must be after death another life in which strict justice shall be done, in which punishment shall be inflicted with just severity on those who deserve it.

So far, all reasonable minds are in agreement. But, this is the starting point of dispute. The Christian Faith affirms emphatically that for certain great criminals the punishment will last for ever; that in Hell the damned will never see the end of their torments. This affirmation excites angry protests from the rationalists, who profit by it to accuse the Catholic Church and her God of the most barbarous cruelty. Talk of a father (they say) who takes pleasure in burning alive his own children during eternity! But the Church does not yield one inch; she continues to proclaim her belief in eternal life; an eternity of happiness for the just, an eternity of misery for the reprobate. On both sides endless duration; everlasting rewards for one, everlasting punishment for the other. Such is the very simple, very clear teaching of the Church. And in this she only faithfully repeats the words of her divine Founder. It is He



Who has taught us to consent to the most painful sacrifices in this world rather than risk the everlasting torture of the worm that never dieth, of the fire which is never extinguished. Again, it is He Who whilst describing the solemn scene of the Last Judgment has promised that He will then say to the sinners: "Depart from me, ye accursed into everlasting fire." And He shows them to us departing into eternal torments, whilst the just ascend into eternal glory. There is a similarity between the reward bestowed on these and the punishment inflicted on the others. These words are so clear that there is no possibility of evading their meaning by giving to them any symbolic interpretation. Hence the Church has always maintained her teaching on this point, notwithstanding the selfish complaints of sensitive souls.

At the same time, undoubtedly, the dogma of eternal punishment is the great stumbling block for many unbelievers. We shall show, therefore, how, far from being in contradiction to our reason and to the divine perfections, it seems rather to be demanded by these.

First of all, an eternal Hell is the *necessary sanction* of the divine law. God as a wise legislator has been obliged to establish a sanction which would cause His laws to be observed. Now, only a Hell lasting for ever could attain this end; could efficaciously frighten rebellious consciences, and maintain in their duty those who would absolutely desire to turn away from it. A Hell limited in duration would not suffice.

In truth the forbidden pleasure which is offered to us at the present moment is very seductive; the punishment to come after death seems very remote, and no matter what its duration, if it is to come to an end, it will be but an insufficient counterpoise. "Hell will not last," the man carried away by passion would say, "well I am going to enjoy myself now, this very moment; I am going to enjoy life. I shall do my time in Hell if I must, and then, I shall come out of it and be all right in the end."

It would be in vain to represent to him that the torments which await him are fearful; if they are to end, then they are nothing more than a Purgatory, and Purgatory, al-

though it may make an impression on delicate consciences, is powerless to affect gross, hardened minds. And then the authority of the divine Law would be reduced to a mockery. Man would have the upper hand; God would be despised; would be powerless to govern His rebellious creature.

But the existence of eternal punishment changes all this. It is impossible to resign oneself to be eternally miserable; this is a contradiction in terms, for to resign oneself is to accept misfortune by reposing in a superior good or in the hope of future good. Now, damnation, defined, is the deprivation of all good, present or future. Consequently, to commit mortal sin, we must previously say to ourselves either that there is no everlasting Hell or we must persuade ourselves that although we deserve it, we shall find some means of escaping it. But we cannot resign ourselves to it.

Therefore, only an everlasting Hell which will never end, efficaciously ensures the triumph of God over man in revolt against Him. He will obey, or else the eternity of his punishment will show what it costs to

attempt anything against the sanctity of God.

But considered in itself, does sin deserve such a punishment? Yes; *for mortal sin is an eternal renunciation of God*. Now, it is just that he who has renounced God for ever should be for ever deprived of Him, that is to say should be eternally damned.

By committing mortal sin man renounces God, for mortal sin is so incompatible with the submission and the love due to God that one cannot commit it without being forced to renounce Him. A son cannot strike his mother and at the same time claim that he loves her. We cannot disobey God in grave matters and still claim that we love Him. We must of necessity choose between God and the forbidden pleasure. And the sinner thus placed under the necessity of making a choice, chooses the criminal pleasure and renounces God.

Further, he renounces God for ever, placing in this forbidden enjoyment his supreme happiness, his last end, for he puts himself deliberately into a state in which he holds God in aversion, a state from which he can-



not unaided deliver himself, and in which according to the natural course of things he must always remain. To quit this state, to return to God, he would require supernatural assistance, efficacious grace. Now, no one is assured of this grace from God. If he has promised pardon to the sinner who sincerely repents, He promises neither the time for, nor the grace of repentance for the sin which man is about to commit; he may die immediately after committing it; die without having repented of it.

Thus to commit mortal sin is to renounce God for ever, no matter how we may delude ourselves with the possibility of eventually repenting; just as a man who throws himself into deep water, knowing he cannot swim, renounces life for ever, no matter what hope he may cherish of being drawn out by some problematical passer-by.

If death should overtake the sinner whilst in this state of having renounced God, then will he remain in it for ever.

Mortal sin therefore merits damnation, which is but the eternal loss of the Good which the sinner has voluntarily renounced

for ever. Thus, it is the punishment of talion. During his life the sinner has preferred criminal pleasure to the will of God. He said to God, "Leave me to myself, I want to have nothing to do with you or your Heaven; keep it. This earth and health to enjoy it are all I ask for." He has rejected the advances of divine Mercy which offered him the means of repentance; he rejected them to the supreme moment in which his soul quitted his body; he died loving the sin more than God. What then could God do with him but say to him, "It was your wish to do without me, you shall have your wish. For all eternity you shall do without me. Depart from me, you accursed!"

Such is damnation, the work of the sinner himself, eternal damnation because the sin which is the cause of it has become by the fatal stroke of death a fixed state; because the sinner remains eternally attached to his sin and God henceforth must hold him in eternal malediction.

Being unable to reply directly to this two-fold demonstration, the rationalists take refuge in the divine perfections, maintaining that

they find between these and the dogma of eternal punishment *reassuring contradictions*.

First, they set before us Justice, and they say to us, "Sin is a momentary fault; it would be unjust to punish it eternally."

To this it is easy to answer that the punishment must be in proportion, not to the duration of the fault, but to its gravity. The thrust of a knife might merit penal servitude for life.

"But," they say, "there is no proportion between never-ending punishment and an act committed in a moment of weakness by a poor frail creature."

This, we reply, is to cherish an illusion regarding the gravity of mortal sin. It is admitted by common sense as well as by all legal tribunals that the gravity of an offense is in direct ratio to the dignity of the person offended. Now, God is infinite Holiness, Infinite Power, Infinite Majesty. Thus, when the miserable worm of the earth called man arises in defiance against the Will of God to prevent its accomplishment, he commits an outrage against Him for which no finite satisfaction could compensate. No penalty

inflicted on the sinner will be sufficient satisfaction; to satisfy justice, the expiation must have no end.

Thus, the justice of God, far from being opposed to eternal punishment demands it.

“Then, they appeal to Infinite Goodness, *Infinite Mercy*. How can you admit, they say, that a God Who is infinitely good, finds pleasure in making His miserable creatures suffer eternally?”

We are, indeed, very insignificant beings to take it upon us to decide what Infinite Goodness should do or not do. In order to judge of one attribute of God, we must not isolate it from the others. God is not only Infinite Goodness, He is also Wisdom and Justice. We must not conceive of His Goodness as being a necessity imposed on His Nature to pardon, to pardon always, in any and every case to pardon. If He owed it to His Goodness to remit the penalty fixed by His Justice, He would be at the mercy of the worst insults; He would be powerless to govern His guilty creature, and in his sacrilegious struggle with God man would have the last word.



Infinitely good as God is, He cannot pardon those who do not wish to repent. Now, *the damned will never wish to repent*. During this life our will is essentially mutable; it veers from good to evil and from evil to good; it abandons God for sin, but with the help of grace it can return to God.

But Death when it comes fixes the will immutably in that state in which it has been overtaken; if it is the enemy of God, such it will remain.

If reason cannot give an exact demonstration of this obstinacy in the damned, neither can it contradict it; it can even account for it. It is man whole and entire, soul and body who must progress towards his destiny and merit his reward, Death by disuniting the human compound, abolishes the ordinary conditions for merit. The soul deprived by the loss of its body of its natural means of progress in knowledge and in virtue cannot repair the evil committed; it cannot progress; it is fixed. Whilst the fruit is on the tree, it can develop, improve; once it is detached, it remains as it is. Thus the soul detached from the body remains as

it is, immutably attached to God or invincibly obstinate in evil.

Sometimes in this life we meet with cases in which this obstinacy is anticipated, as for instance that of F—— M——, an Italian who on his deathbed when implored to repent cried out: "No, I shall never bend to God. Write these words on my tomb: *Non flectar.*"

If in the midst of the awful torments of Hell the damned regret their sins in so far as they are the cause of their sufferings, they do not regret them because they offended God. "But," it will be further insisted, "should God not give to all men whilst in this life a light so strong that they would be able to see clearly their true interests as well as their duty? Then all would do what is necessary to be saved."

God, I answer, has willed that man should be *free*. He would not regard Himself as sufficiently honored by forced homage. For this reason it behooved Him to leave His infinite Goodness wrapped in a certain obscurity which makes our merit. The consequence of this freedom is that some make

bad use of it and are damned. But, as they have had sufficient light and grace to save themselves if they wished to do so, they alone are responsible for their damnation. Divine Goodness has not failed in its task.

Therefore it is vain for human understanding to see in the dogma of eternal punishment contradictions to reason. No doubt it is a terrible mystery, but we must accept it on the word of God: Hell is everlasting. And hence it is an awful punishment. The least suffering, a pin-prick, if it were to last for ever, would become in a manner infinite torture. What then will it be if in the sufferings of Hell are comprised every imaginable torture?

*Supreme sorrow* because of the loss of the Sovereign Good—and at the same time the deprivation of every good.

*Supreme remorse* because the damned has voluntarily, of his free will, been the cause of his own misfortune. If he is in Hell, it is because he has willed it, because he has voluntarily chosen this awful position when he could easily have gone to Heaven.

*Supreme despair* because he has no hope

whatever that his sufferings will ever cease or even grow less.

To these moral tortures caused by the loss of God will be added that of fire. What is this fire? It is real fire. The obvious meaning of the words of Jesus Christ "depart into everlasting fire" and all tradition oblige us to believe this.

Such is Hell, everlasting, according to Catholic dogma, suffering, the awful depths of which make dizzy those who would try to sound them, but escape from which rests entirely with ourselves, sufferings to which will be condemned only those who shall obstinately persist in sinning to the last moment of their lives.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF LIFE

**W**E have been created to contemplate infinite Truth; infinite Beauty; to love infinite Goodness; to be united to Him in a union which shall be our external beatitude, whilst at the same time it gives everlasting glory to God. This beatitude God could have bestowed upon us immediately after our creation; He could have placed us without any merit on our part in immediate possession of the intuitive Vision of His divine Being. But it was more in conformity with His Wisdom to make us *merit* our eternal happiness. For God governs every being according to its particular nature.

The irrational animal is led by instinct which is but another name for divine Providence, to an end of which it knows nothing. But man, endowed with reason and free-will, capable of knowing and loving good in itself,

must seek after it of himself, must by his own effort merit it. For this reason God has willed that we should be, by the exercise of our precious liberty, the artificers of our own happiness, the architects of our eternal destiny. He has, therefore, ordained a time of preparation, of trial and of merit. The present life is this time of preparation; it is a prelude, during which we determine our eternal lot by the manner in which we make use of our liberty, in which we undergo the trial.

And how does God try us? He has given us a law to be observed. This law, perfectly conformable to our reason, is often in contradiction to our desire for material and immediate enjoyments, to our innate desire for earthly riches, pleasures, honors. We are, therefore, drawn in opposite directions by our own instinctive inclinations and by the divine law. Shall we be faithful to God, or shall we prefer to Him the forbidden pleasure? We are free to choose. If, contrary to our inclination, we elect to fulfill the will of God, that is victory; if we yield to our natural instinct for enjoyment, that is defeat. God

registers in His infinite memory as in a great book all our victories, and also our defeats which, whilst we live, can be repaired. At the end of our life the time of trial will be over for ever; our soul will appear before God to receive its account, and this will be done quickly. If our soul has left this world in the moment of one last victory, it will find all its merits added up, and it will receive the degree of glory to which it has a right, the degree of intimate union with God and of happiness which according to its merits has been allotted to it. If, on the contrary, that soul has passed out of this life in a state of defeat which it would not retrieve, and which has now become an irretrievable disaster, then it will behold flame forth its terrible sentence; it will understand that it is damned, and then supreme anguish, remorse, despair will take possession of that lost soul.

Such is the meaning of life; a contest the prize for which is Heaven; a time of trial for us all, the final result of which is irrevocable.

But to regard life solely from this point of view would not suffice. We are not in this world solely to purchase our eternal happiness.

To think of ourselves alone would be selfishness. We have been created before all to glorify God. How then are we to glorify Him here on earth?

The way in which we shall glorify God has been already indicated to us by natural reason.<sup>1</sup> We shall glorify God by learning to know Him more and more in His creatures; by adoring His perfections of which they are the image; and by loving Him as the Author of all good.

But Christian revelation raises us still higher. For it teaches us that we must glorify God in knowing Him by Faith, in trusting to Him by Hope, and in uniting ourselves to Him by Charity. The God of the Christian Religion is Truth itself, Infinite Beauty, Supreme Good. If we were to behold Him clearly, we should attach ourselves to Him with such ardor as would deprive us of our liberty to separate from Him if we wished. In order to leave us free, God reveals Himself to us through *Faith*, which is not the full light.

We must *believe* that in the Supreme Author of the world there exist three persons, per-

<sup>1</sup> Chap. IX.



fectly one and the same in all that is absolute, only distinguished from one another by a distinction of relation; the Father, principle of the Trinity; the Son the perfect conception and image of the Father; the Holy Ghost, the subsistent love of the Father and the Son.

We must believe that the Eternal Father has sent His Son to be made man under the name of Jesus Christ, that He might merit Heaven for us, and show us the way thither; that Jesus Christ has founded a Church which is the infallible guardian of religious truth. Consequently we must believe in the teachings of the Church; we must observe her ritual; submit to her Sacraments.

No doubt God has provided unexceptionable signs by which the divine origin of His revelation may be known by proofs which every sincere mind can easily grasp. Nevertheless these signs do not always carry with them that immediate conviction which necessarily commands the adherence of the understanding; here the intervention of the will becomes necessary. Thus it is that our act of Faith is voluntary, meritorious for us, at the same time that it gives glory to our God.

Whilst adhering thus to God by Faith, we confide in Him by *Hope*; that is to say by our conviction that in His Power and Goodness He will lead us to eternal salvation in spite of the obstacles which rise before us.

The power of God seems *checked* by the powers of evil. Of the fifteen hundred millions who dwell upon this earth, how very few know and adore the true God. Catholics scarcely number three hundred millions, and of these how few serve Him faithfully without ever offering sacrifice to the idol of sin. The world is the kingdom of Satan. The enemies of God hold earthly power, tribunals, laws, public wealth, etc.

But, this apparent defeat of God notwithstanding, Hope causes us to recognize that the divine Power is unconquerable; evil does not really triumph; God will save those whom He has determined to save. He will lead to Heaven His elect. And all the powers of Hell leagued together will not cause Him to lose one of those whom He has chosen, of those whom He has loved and chosen from all eternity.

But, it will be asked, does God really love

us? Often it would seem that He does not, since He makes us suffer. Suffering is the universal lot of humanity, it is endemic in the human race; no nation, no age is exempt from suffering; it spares no one.

Listen to that first cry of the new-born infant, it is a cry of suffering. Look at that child still in those first years of existence when care is unknown, when all should be sunshine and laughter. And yet sorrow has visited that child, for he weeps bitter tears. Do you see that young man? He thought to find happiness in pleasure, and now overwhelmed with weariness, with the bitterness of finding himself deceived, he is sunk in the depths of dejection. Turn to yonder old man in whose sad face is graven the lines of care. Nothing now remains to him of life save its bitterness, its suffering, and each day he sees himself nearer to the grave whither all mankind are hastening.

In a wretched garret with fireless grate and empty cupboard some unfortunate is dying of cold and hunger; in some retired spot, in a lonely wood, or on the bank of some deep river, a man yielding to despair, by self

destruction seeks to escape from suffering; whilst elsewhere sorrowing parents accompany to their last resting place the remains of an idolized child in whom they had centered all their hopes.

All generations of the human race have wept, and the fount of human tears has not yet run dry. Every man at his birth finds sorrow sitting beside his cradle, and again he finds her beside his pillow as he lies dying, or, rather, suffering has never left him; she is our inseparable companion during life. And yet, this inexorable law of suffering notwithstanding, Hope makes us say: God is good. Yes; in spite of appearances to the contrary, God is infinitely good, and He makes suffering the instrument of our moral perfection and of our eternal happiness.

And how? In the first place, suffering expiates the past; it purifies us from our faults, and enables us to pay our debts to divine justice. And at the same time, it affects our future. For it suppresses concupiscence, the source of our sins, and teaches us to forego those pleasures, the expiation of which costs us so dear. And then, suffering



molds the will; it tempers the character as sudden refrigeration tempers metal. It is a bitter draught, but wholesome. Nothing exalts us so much as a great sorrow.

Above all, sorrow is the means of which God makes use to bring back to Him the souls who have been separated from Him by sin. Blinded by pleasure, captivated by the enjoyment we found in a creature, enjoyment which in our folly we thought would last forever, we had forgotten God, our last end.

Suddenly, a frightful accident, a cruel loss, takes from us the object of our affections; a great sorrow strikes to our very hearts, and we are forced to reflect: "Ah, what is this enjoyment, this pleasure which vanishes from me so quickly? Fool that I am to seek for happiness in the perishable things of this life! I see now that true happiness is only to be found in God—God, Who is the only unchanging everlasting good. My God, I return to Thee, I love Thee more than all riches, pleasures, honors, I love Thee above all things."

Thus it is that suffering teaches us that queen of virtues, divine *Charity*. Suffering is

the hard steel which falling on the stone of our hearts strikes from it the spark of pure love.

This pure love of God for Himself only by which the soul is so closely united to God that it forgets self, and desires nothing but His glory, His exterior glory, the only good which it can procure for its well-beloved, this love alone can glorify God worthily. And that God may be more known, loved and glorified, the soul is prepared to sacrifice all that it holds most dear on the altar of divine love. The soul filled with this pure love does not shrink from sorrow; she accepts it not only with resignation but with joy; were she free to choose, she would take the crown of thorns in preference to that of roses, in order that she might become more like to the Son of God Who for love of us willed to become the Man of Sorrows, might render herself more pleasing to Him.

Faith, Hope, Charity, by these we glorify God; for this He has created the world which, in His eyes, is but an immense manufactory for these virtues. Nothing else matters to Him; and when the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity shall have reached the number which

He desires, then shall the world come to an end.

It is in this light that events must be judged. The value of any event which the world calls happy or unhappy is to be measured, in reality, according to the number and the fervor of the acts of virtue which it has called forth. From this point of view, the most frightful catastrophes, such as the wreck of the Titanic, may be happy events, if they have been the occasion of acts of humble faith, of acts of humility from man, so proud of his giant vessel, but now in the presence of Infinite Power and Wisdom, obliged to acknowledge his imprudence. Happy event indeed, if it called forth acts of supreme hope from those about to die, and Who, before going down, sang "Nearer, my God to Thee." Happy above all, because of the acts of charity of those who having the chance of escape, sacrificed their lives that others might be saved.

Thus, by the light of Christianity let us regard the end of life as being the production of acts which give glory to God and are meritorious for man, above all are when produced

by means of suffering, whether voluntary or merely accepted with resignation, bodily suffering, sickness, accidents, mental suffering, sorrow, mourning; humiliation, reverses, suffering caused by temptations and the struggle against oneself, the suffering caused by labor and physical and mental effort.

Christianity teaches us to turn all these sufferings to the glory of God and to draw from them the assurance of our eternal happiness.

But a natural hope would not suffice for the eliciting of acts which would merit the intuitive vision of God. The means must be proportioned to the end. The Beatific Vision being essentially beyond our nature, the acts which lead to it must be supernatural. Therefore, they require from us a supernatural principle of action or of life; this principle is sanctifying grace, the beginning in us of divine life, the life which is developed here on earth in the exercise of supernatural acts, whilst awaiting for it to bloom in full in Heaven in the light of glory.

For this exercise of virtue, we must have supernatural help, just as we must have the



natural co-operation of God in all that we do. A second cause only acts in virtue of the first cause. This help, which is actual grace, is the light which shows us what God expects from us and the force which urges us to do it, whilst leaving us quite free. This grace is not due to us from God, He gives it to us because of the intercession of His Son, Jesus Christ, Who has merited it for us by His life, His sufferings and His death. In order to give it to us, God requires that we should ask of Him this grace by prayer. Hence the necessity of constant persevering prayer. This prayer must be offered in the name of Jesus Christ, and it is of supreme efficacy when it is offered through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, through whom God wills to give us all the graces which He designs for us.

To prayer must be added the reception of the Sacraments, above all of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, which are the means instituted by Jesus Christ to purify and to nourish our souls. The use of these means is not optional, but of obligation, as well as the practice of other external religious acts.

The Christian Religion is not merely light

and instruction for our mind; it is also a collection of ceremonies and practices from which our will must draw the strength which it needs. The practice of religion, therefore, is the means, the necessary, obligatory means, by which to ensure our eternal happiness, by which we shall happily reach the end and aim of our life and which will enable us to pass without fear through the gates of death.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### WHERE SHALL WE FIND TRUE CHRISTIANITY?

**W**E know that with regard to the future life and the means of securing for ourselves happiness in that life, there exists revealed doctrine. Only in Christian Revelation can this doctrine be found, because, after eliminating other religions this alone remains.

We have explained the Christian theory regarding our future destiny according to the teaching of the Catholic Church. But there are other religious communities, Protestant, Anglican, Russian and Greek, which also claim to be Christian. We must, therefore, seek to discover which is right; we must examine into each one until we know where true Christianity is to be found. Common sense will enable us to resolve this question easily.

Of six hundred million Christians, nearly

three hundred millions obey the Pope. The others are divided into an endless number of sects whose dissensions provoke the derision of unbelievers. Resting as it does on free inquiry which allows everyone to fashion his belief according to his own opinion, Protestantism is not *one* religion, but rather a common caravansary in which the most diverse opinions are tolerated, from the Ritualists who admit nearly all the Catholic dogmas to the vague Deism, which rejects every mystery.

Unless we are prepared to admit that the Religion founded by the Son of God was wholly without unity or coherence, we cannot acknowledge that in any of these decaying sects is true Christianity to be found. Only is it found in the Church whose members are closely united in the same Faith, in obedience to the one Head, and in participation in the same Sacraments.

Amongst all the communions which base their belief on the Gospel, the Catholic Church is the only one which has a magisterial doctrine formulating the unity of the Faith; in the others private interpretation of the Holy Scriptures is freely permitted; tradition is



either rejected or neglected, often falsified. In those communions in which a man does not fashion his belief according to his own interpretation, as happens in Protestant sects, then it is framed according to the conception of a Patriarch at Constantinople, of a Metropolitan or a Synod at Petrograd, all of whom nevertheless, have but little to distinguish them. Therefore, it is only in the Catholic Church that Christian Revelation in its pristine purity can be found.

It is, moreover, easy to demonstrate from the Gospel and tradition that Jesus Christ willed to found a visible Church, that he has established this Church in the form of a monarchy by confiding to His Apostle Peter the power, to be transmitted in perpetuity, of governing, teaching and of celebrating the sacrifice of the New Covenant. Therefore, where dwells the successor of Peter there is found the Church of Jesus Christ, that is to say, in Rome, whose Sovereign Pontiff has descended by an uninterrupted succession of 260 Popes from the Prince of the Apostles.

We shall not undertake to demonstrate this truth a second time. But as we are lim-

iting ourselves to the question of our eternal destiny, let us see what is the teaching on this point of the sects separated from Rome. If their divergence from Catholic doctrine prove unsatisfactory to the understanding, it will be confirmation of their falsity.

In his doctrine regarding the future life Luther varied greatly. In the beginning, he admitted the existence of Purgatory. He ended by denying it wholly, and he suppressed all prayers for the dead, maintaining that the present life is the only time for that purification which would be completed, according to him, by the pangs of death.

Calvin, after saying that Purgatory is an invention of the Popes, nevertheless admits that after death there is a state of waiting, an intermediary state, between eternal glory and damnation.

In our days, the Protestants either deny the existence of Purgatory, or whilst admitting it under another name, reject prayers for the dead as superstitious or unnecessary.

Now, on these two points, they go against reason and against the most natural feelings of the human heart.

A person dies a happy death free from the guilt of mortal sin, but yet with his soul stained by the guilt of many venial sins to which he retained an attachment to the last moment of life. Can he enter immediately into Heaven where nothing defiled can enter? When a sinner, whose whole life has been one long tissue of crime, is converted on his death bed, or it may be at the foot of the gallows, and who dies without having had time to expiate his faults; can he at once participate in the happiness of the elect, of the Saints who spent their lives in penance and mortification in continual striving to avoid or to purify themselves from the slightest faults? Surely not; if it were so, God would be encouraging negligence in His service.

But, on the other hand, those souls who have been careless about minor faults; those souls who, at the last moment, have returned to God; must they be condemned to Hell like the impenitent sinner who went out of this life hating God, or even blaspheming Him? Once more, no; if it were so, it would be cruelty.

Thus, it is impossible for these souls who are in a state of grace but yet not wholly

undefiled to pass at once into Heaven, and it is equally impossible that free as they are from mortal sin, they can be sent into Hell. There must, therefore, be an intermediary state, a time of expiation in which these souls may be purified before entering Heaven. This intermediary state is Purgatory, the existence of which to human reason enlightened by Faith is indubitable.

The dogma of Purgatory is consoling, it permits us to hope for the salvation of those, perhaps very dear to us, who after a life far from edifying, have died suddenly. We are only too sure, alas! that they cannot have gone straight to Heaven. Were there no Purgatory, there would be no place for them but Hell, terrible, everlasting. But, knowing that Purgatory exists, where, no matter how long they may be detained, they will be purified completely from the stains of their manifold sins, we have reason to hope that at the supreme moment, before appearing in the presence of God, they may have had sufficient sincere repentance and that in the end they will be saved.

By denying the doctrine of Purgatory,



Protestants whose relatives have been overtaken by sudden death, most probably in a state of sin, are deprived of great consolation. Similarly, of what consolation are they not deprived by refusing to believe in prayers for the dead, declaring them vain and useless, in contradiction to Catholic dogma which teaches that the souls in Purgatory can be relieved and delivered from their sufferings by our suffrages.

It is hard to see anyone whom we love, friend or relative, suffering horribly, and to be unable to give them any relief. And yet to this Protestant teaching would condemn us. Death snatches from us a beloved one, father, mother, husband, wife; but we must not pray for the repose of the soul so dear to us; it would be useless.

It is not thus with Catholics who admit the dogma of the Communion of Saints, according to which the Church is one great family, with God as the common Father of all. Now, in a family the children can intercede one for the other, and mutually obtain pardon of their faults. But the Church is more than a family; it forms a body of which Jesus Christ is the

Head. The various members of this body can aid one another, just as the members of our bodies help one another when necessary. It is not the Faithful on earth alone who are united in this communion, with them are united also the Blessed in Heaven and the souls in Purgatory. Death does not break these ties; it does not disturb the close union existing between the three divisions of the Church; that which still on earth is advancing, fighting as it goes, to Heaven; that which has already reached the abode of bliss and there dwells triumphant with God, and that third division which at the gate of Heaven is being purified from the stains contracted during life. The Saints in Heaven intercede for us, and we intercede for the souls in Purgatory. Such is the consoling doctrine ever taught by the Catholic Church and attested by Holy Scripture and continuous tradition.

Concerning Hell, the first Protestants strongly maintained the terrible dogma of its existence and eternal duration. But since Rationalism has gained so many adherents amongst them, they have considerably modified their belief. In the first place, the doc-

trine of eternal punishment is no longer held as such; it is now merely a matter of opinion on which the Scripture (we are told), does not express itself with enough clearness. Consequently, some hold that there is no eternal punishment except for a few particularly obstinate reprobates; that the majority of the damned can repent and be saved.

According to others, the punishment which awaits hardened criminals is utter *annihilation*, either at death or after a certain time of torture proportioned to their crimes. Some admit a final and general restoration of the whole human race to a state of goodness and happiness.

These opinions, it is true, are more soothing than Catholic dogma to our instinctive sensitiveness, which shrinks in horror from the doctrine of everlasting punishment. But they imply a complete want of understanding concerning the perfections, the rights of God, and the gravity of sin which outrages His divine Majesty, as if He were no more offended than we are when one of our fellow-beings fails to show us respect; as if His divine Goodness were a perfection which should always prevail

over justice and disarm it. For, to impose on God a law which would oblige Him to pardon finally, no matter how great the persistence in sin, would be to render God powerless before the defiant sinner. Such a doctrine would simply give liberty to sin, for, according to it, the just and sinners alike would finally attain the same end, the same happiness. It is useless to try to evade this result by substituting the annihilation of the guilty for pardon.

In the first place this destruction is contrary to the law which God would seem to have laid down for Himself, of destroying nothing which He has made. The molecules of matter pass from one combination to another; they are not destroyed. Why should it be otherwise with our souls? The gift of existence is irrevocable; the manner of the soul's existence may change, but existence itself is not taken away, this must be preserved to serve for the punishment of the rebellious creature.

In truth, the punishment of utter destruction would be insufficient to deter the sinner from gratifying his passions. Carnal man



would be quite content with nothing more than the pleasures of this world; he would be satisfied with the lot of an animal, provided he was permitted to indulge in those sensual pleasures for which he lusts.

Therefore, the hypothesis of annihilation is not only altogether gratuitous and undemonstrable, it is false and immoral, because it destroys the only adequate sanction of the divine law, the only sanction by which God remains finally Master. Eternal punishment is necessary for the safeguarding of the supreme rights of God.

Thus in its doctrine regarding the future life, Protestantism is as wanting in the characteristics of truth, as it is in its disgraceful origin and its anarchical constitution.

As regards the Greek Churches, the offspring of the Schism of Photius and of Michael Cerularius, on the question of our future destiny at times, they seem to be somewhat in agreement with Catholics, as in Dositheus's Confession or Profession of Faith; and, again, in that of Moghila, they have more affinity to Protestants. They have no supreme doctrinal authority whatever. As they admit

infallibility to none but the first seven Councils, it is impossible for them to have *one* certain solution of these questions of doctrine which arise during the course of centuries. Thus, they have not the assured characteristic of Truth which are proper to a divine work.

Further, broken up as they are into national groups, Roumanian, Bulgarian, Hellenic, Serbian, subservient to the Czar or the Sultan, they, with the Protestants, have not that characteristic of unity which distinguishes the Church founded by Jesus Christ, Whose members are all united under one visible Head.

From this rapid summary, we draw the conclusion that only in the Catholic Church is integral Christianity to be found, and that by accepting the solution which she gives us of the problem of our future destiny we shall act according to the dictates of reason and prudence.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CONCLUSION

OUR problem is solved. The present life is not for man the end of everything. The death of the Just is not, as has been said, the close of a beautiful day; rather is it the dawn of a never-ending day. After death a new life awaits us, a life quite different from the present one. A life of all joy, all happiness, a life in which sorrow and suffering shall be unknown. But conformably to our free and intelligent nature, God wills that we should ourselves merit this happiness by proving to Him in this life our fidelity, our love, in the practice of the Catholic Religion which He has deigned to reveal to us and to impose on us as the only one pleasing to Him.

To merit Heaven; such is the supreme end and aim of our life. And this end we are absolutely obliged to attain. We cannot

resign ourselves to miss this end. We resign ourselves to many disagreeable things; to the loss of fortune, health, reputation, even death itself; but never can we resign ourselves to the thought of losing Heaven. In truth, if we do not go to Heaven, then we must necessarily go to Hell where shall be heaped on us all shame, all suffering, all remorse. There will be no intermediary state between perfect happiness and supreme suffering. If even this suffering, no matter how prolonged it might be, were to have an end, one might, strictly speaking, resign oneself to it. But no; Hell will never end, it will last for ever.

Everlasting punishment, this is what compels us to attain our end, to merit Heaven, no matter at what cost.

Eternity is endless duration; we cannot estimate it; it is beyond all calculation. Compared to Eternity, a hundred million centuries are less than a drop of water compared to the ocean, because a drop of water, small as it is, is an aliquot part of the ocean; theoretically, it might serve for its measurement. But Eternity cannot be measured by time,



there is no common measure between them. After thousands upon thousands of millions of centuries, Eternity would not be in the smallest degree shortened, it would be just as endless as now. Whatever we take from it, we can never shorten it; it is a road upon which we may walk for ever, yet never advance.

We may say when a man dies, that he has entered into eternity. But never will anyone be able to say that he has reached the third, the fourth, the thousandth part of his eternity; it will be for him as whole and entire as it was at the moment of his death. And whilst endless in duration, the tortures of Hell will never vary; there will come no periods of calm, of relative rest, as in the sickness, the suffering of this world, but ever and always the most intense torture, ever the most violent rage and despair without truce, without respite, without end, without hope.

We cannot, therefore, resign ourselves to go to Hell; at any cost, we must avoid it; we must merit Heaven, this is the one, the only thing necessary. I am content to do without all else, fortune, health, reputation, even life itself; I cannot do without eternal

salvation. It is not necessary that I should have riches, honors, happiness on earth, for, sooner or later, all these will come to an end. But it is necessary that I should secure the eternal salvation of my soul, because eternity will never have an end. Therefore, there is no question here of considering whether it will not cost me too much to merit Heaven, I *must* merit it; we do not dispute with necessity, we submit to it. If, in order to gain Heaven, I must suffer, deny myself, conquer myself, well, I *will* suffer; I *will* deny myself; I *will* conquer myself; I prefer a few years of effort followed by an eternity of rest to a few years, a few days perhaps, of transient empty pleasure which would merit for me an eternity of suffering. I choose that which ensures me the greatest amount of good and the least of evil. To ensure my eternal salvation—this is all that matters to me, and to succeed in this one all-supreme affair, I must be ready to do everything that God asks of me.

What He asks of me is that I should make good use of my life. On our life depends our eternity. Each one shall receive according to his works; each one shall reap what he has

sown. All our voluntary actions shall have eternal consequences. In one moment I do that which ages shall not destroy. That sin which I am about to commit, if not expiated by my repentance, will torture me through all eternity. On the other hand, that courageous act, that victory over temptation, will procure for me eternal joy.

With God's grace which will not be wanting to me, I am, then, the master of my own destiny. Heaven and Hell are before me, I have my choice; and that which I choose, shall be given to me. On my life depends my eternity. Regarded from the point of view of its duration, the present life is nothing; the ratio of the finite to the infinite is zero. But from the point of view of its importance and its consequences, this life equals Eternity in value; as the life, so the eternity. On our life depends our eternity as the plant on its seed, as the trajectory of the projectile depends on its initial velocity and direction; a straight line indefinitely prolonged, depends for its endless course on its first beginning.

At all cost, therefore, we must make good use of this precious life; we must be more

zealous in profiting of every opportunity of merit for Heaven; more eager than a miser is to heap up riches. For during all eternity, the degree of our bliss will be in proportion to the amount of merit which we shall have acquired during our short sojourn on earth. Hence, I shall act wisely if, before each of my actions, I ask myself "What shall I gain for Eternity by this act? Will it advance me on the road to Heaven, or will it lead me away from this road?"

"Nothing but what leads me to my final goal shall have any value in my sight, that is to say, those acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, which the practice of the Catholic Religion shall elicit from me. I shall reject nothing but what prevents the attainment of my end, compared to which all else is utterly worthless to me."

Our life should be one continued preparation for Eternity. Before this supreme pre-occupation, every other interest should disappear. Did we but rightly understand the importance of this preparation, we should fly the world and retire to a monastery in order to labor exclusively for our eternal salvation.



But everyone has not a religious vocation; God does not require everyone to give up the pleasures and riches of this world; even whilst possessing these we can work out our salvation. It is permissible to a traveler to think not only of the goal to which he is journeying, but also of the manner, more or less comfortable, in which he will travel. Provided that he does not forget whither he is journeying, he may enjoy the scenery through which he passes, and gather the flowers which he meets with on his route. Similarly, we, who are traveling to Eternity, may occupy ourselves with the manner in which we shall travel. It is permitted to us to make for ourselves an honorable and lucrative career; to enjoy the pure joys of family life; to provide for the welfare of our children, provided that whilst thus occupied we do not lose sight of our eternal future; that we do not become too much attached to the things of this world, which must be of merely secondary importance. Whatever we may think, or whatever we may say, our supreme, dominant anxiety must be to ensure our eternal happiness.

On our life, on every moment of our life,

depends our eternal weal or woe. But, strictly speaking, it only depends on the last moment of that life, the moment of death. That is the moment in which the decisive blow shall be struck. Whatever we are in the sight of God at the moment when death comes to us, such we shall be for all eternity. Our eternal lot, our degree of happiness in Heaven will be in exact proportion to the state of grace in which we are, the degree of merit which is ours at the moment of death.

Hence death is of exceptional, of capital importance; on it depends all eternity. Our whole life, therefore, should be spent in preparing for this act which can be performed only once; if we fail in doing it well, there is no hope that we shall be allowed to try again. For this reason, the Sages of antiquity said that the end and aim of philosophy is to learn to die well. Death is the end and aim of life. To prepare for death, we should, casting aside all fear of looking death in the face, consider our own death, not even shrinking from the consideration of ourselves in our last agony, or lying in our coffin. This habitual thought of death would preserve us from grave faults,

and if, perchance, in a moment of weakness, we had the misfortune to lose the grace of God, we should at once, if possible, seek to regain it in the Sacrament of Penance; if not, then by an act of perfect contrition.

In the next place, we should prepare for death by the practice of detachment. First of all, detachment from those we love. There are lawful affections, affections even of obligation, such as the ties of Nature. Let us preserve such ties. But let us not forget that God holds these in His hands; when it pleases Him, He will break them. On this point, we must resign ourselves to Him, generously and with filial trust and love. But, above all, we must be detached from the goods and the pleasures of this world. Here on earth, we do not really own anything, not even our own bodies, we are only tenants whom death quite unexpectedly may oblige to quit. Let us be quite prepared to go, and to answer cheerfully: "It is all the same to me, I have another house elsewhere waiting for me."

Thirdly, we must prepare our body for death by the practice of mortification. Soldiers by maneuvers, prepare for battle. Death

is a rough fight, a terrible struggle. And since one day, perhaps soon, we must fight this fight, engage in this struggle, we must harden ourselves beforehand by daily exercises, the exercises of a laborious, courageous, mortified life, the life of a soldier in wartime who must not feel fear or fatigue, or heat or cold, or hunger or thirst, or blows or wounds. Let us beware of treating our body with too much care and consideration.

Finally, a day will come when this sacrifice being prepared and accepted, we shall have to complete it. Sickness is generally the beginning of the end. We feel feverish; we lie down upon a bed: this is the altar upon which God will immolate us, each in our turn. Let us make of this act, so supremely painful but necessary, a sacrifice worthy of a Christian by accepting death and all the sufferings which precedes it, and by uniting them to the sufferings and the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

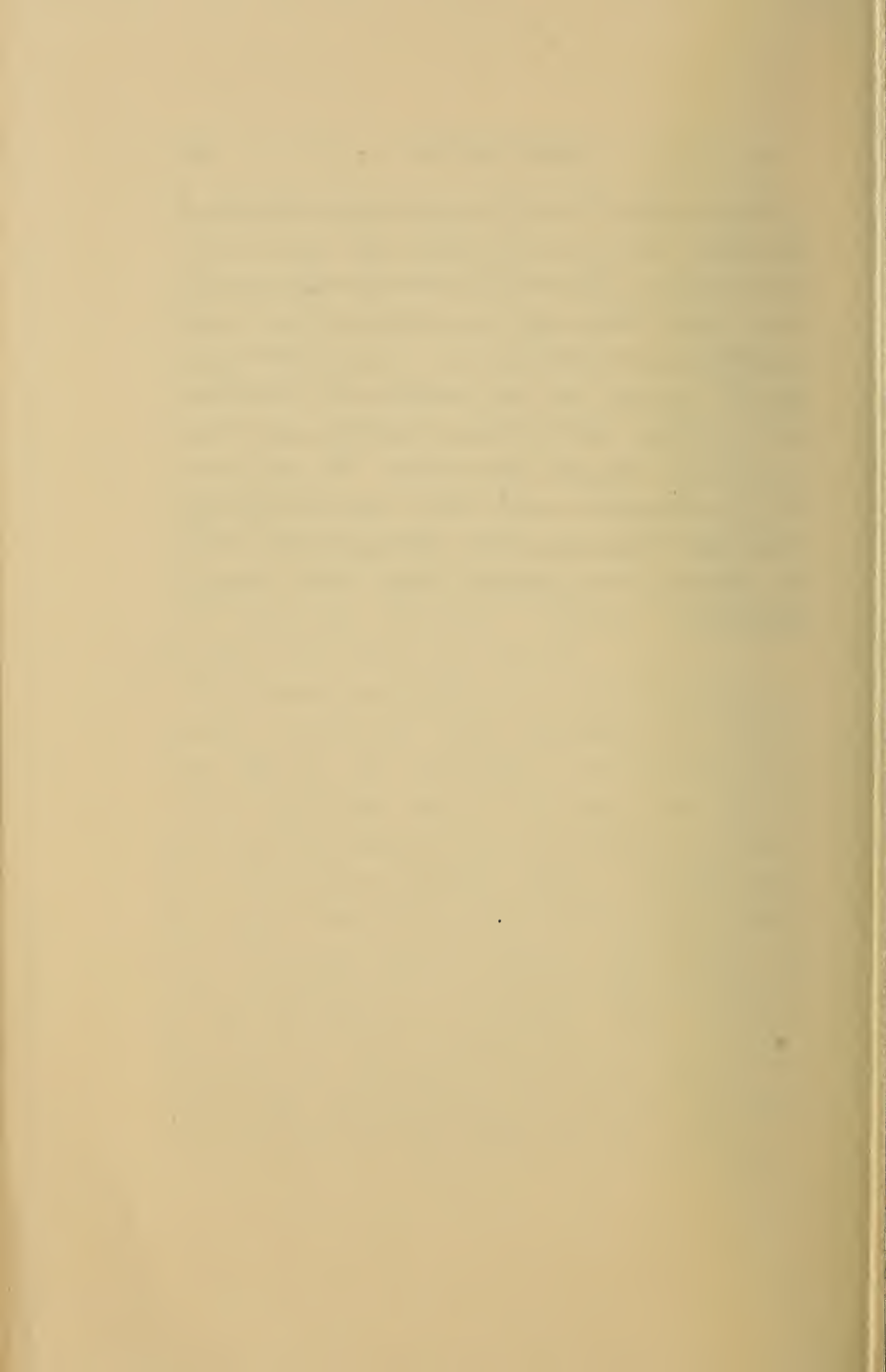
For Our Lord, not satisfied with submitting Himself with us to the law of labor and of suffering, has also willed to taste of death, just as a good mother first tastes herself

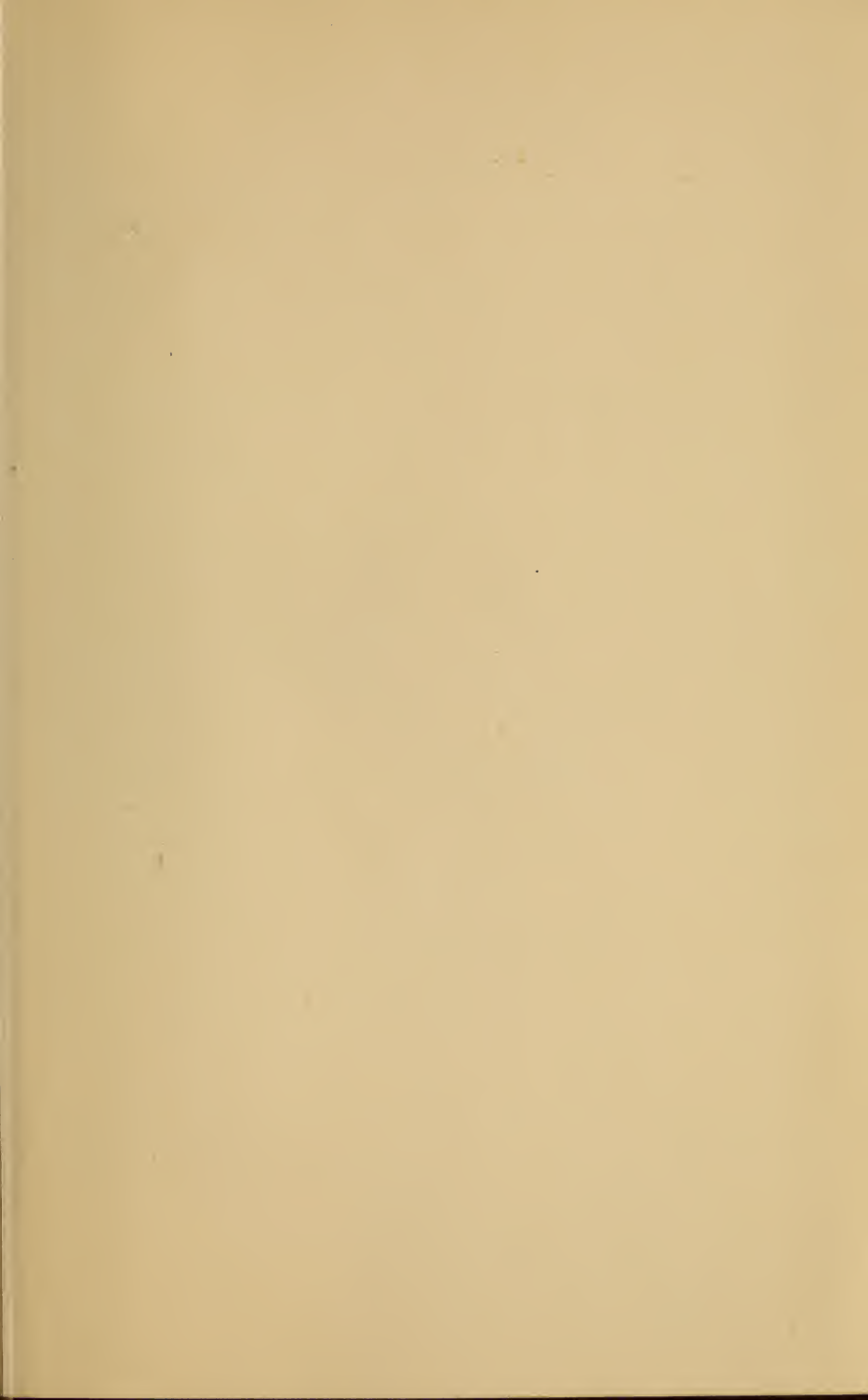


the bitter medicine which she offers to her child. And to soften for us this terrible punishment, Jesus with ineffable tenderness, willed to die the most disgraceful, the most cruel of deaths. Henceforth, for us death has lost the greater part of its bitterness. It has become a religious act by which the Christian offers himself with Jesus Christ, like Jesus Christ; his first words are words of resignation, "Father, 'Thy Will be done,'" his last, those of filial abandonment into the hands of the Heavenly Father, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

How sweet is death to him who is thus prepared to meet it; how consoling is a death like this to the survivors, even whilst they weep around the bed of the dear one who is passing from them! Nature will have its way; we must weep for the dying. Family ties, the ties of friendship, cannot be broken without inflicting a painful shock. We weep; we wrap ourselves in mourning as did all Nature at the death-bed on Calvary. But through the gloomy shadows we perceive dimly the sun of the Resurrection, just as after the sadness we look for the radiant Easter morn.

Let us ask of God to grant us the death of the Just. Let us try above all to merit it by our lives. For, with a few merciful exceptions upon which no one should count, death is according to the life led. Let us live well, that is to say, in the practice of Christian Faith, Hope, and divine Charity, and then we shall no longer fear death. No doubt, it will be always a cold, dark tunnel through which we must pass, but, through it we shall see shining the glorious light of a happy eternity.



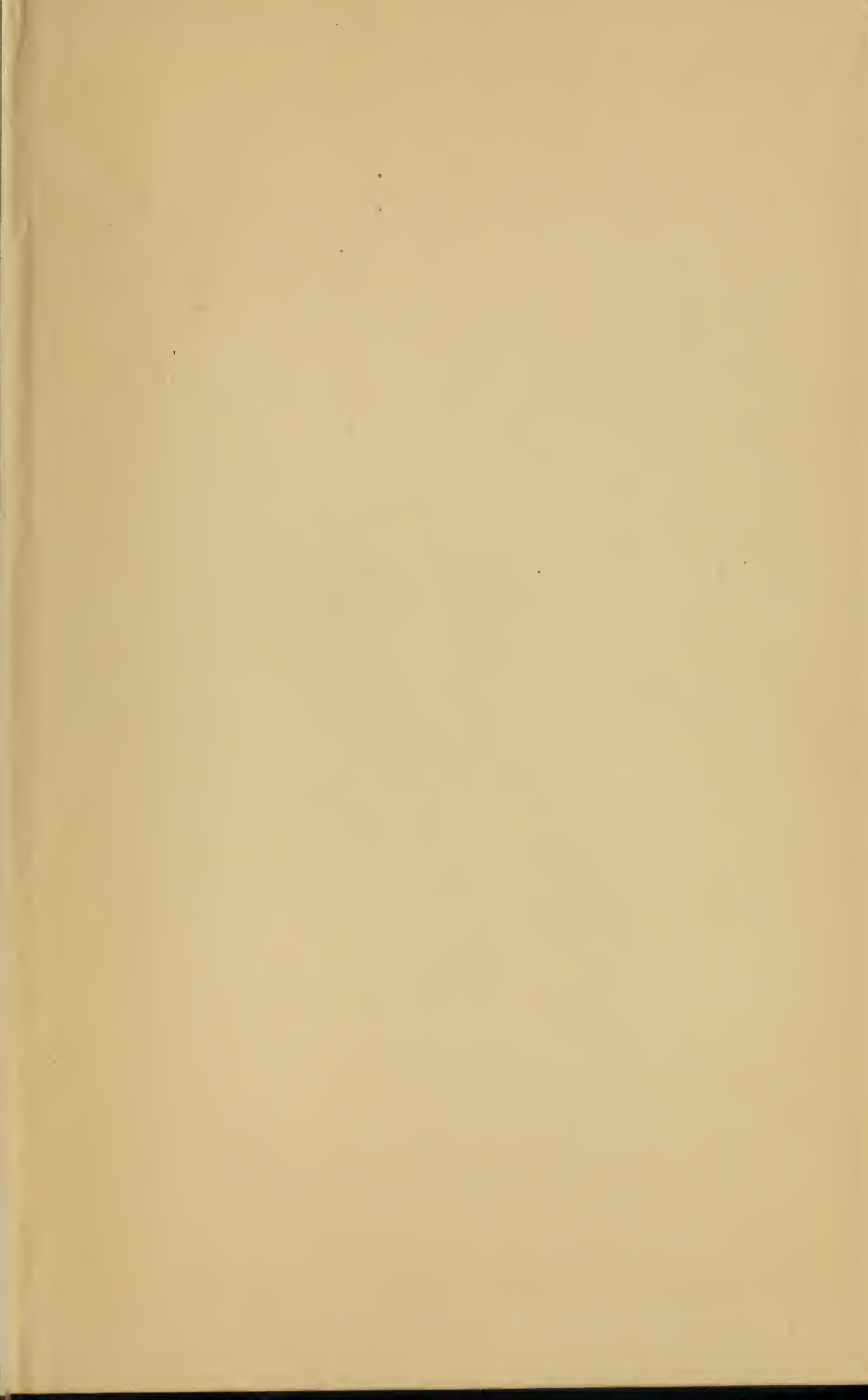




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